

THE Atlantic

JUNE 2001 MONTHLY

FREEDOM OF THE SKIES

*From airline hell to
a new era of travel*

BY JAMES FALLOWS

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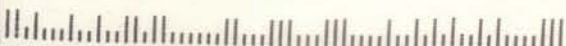
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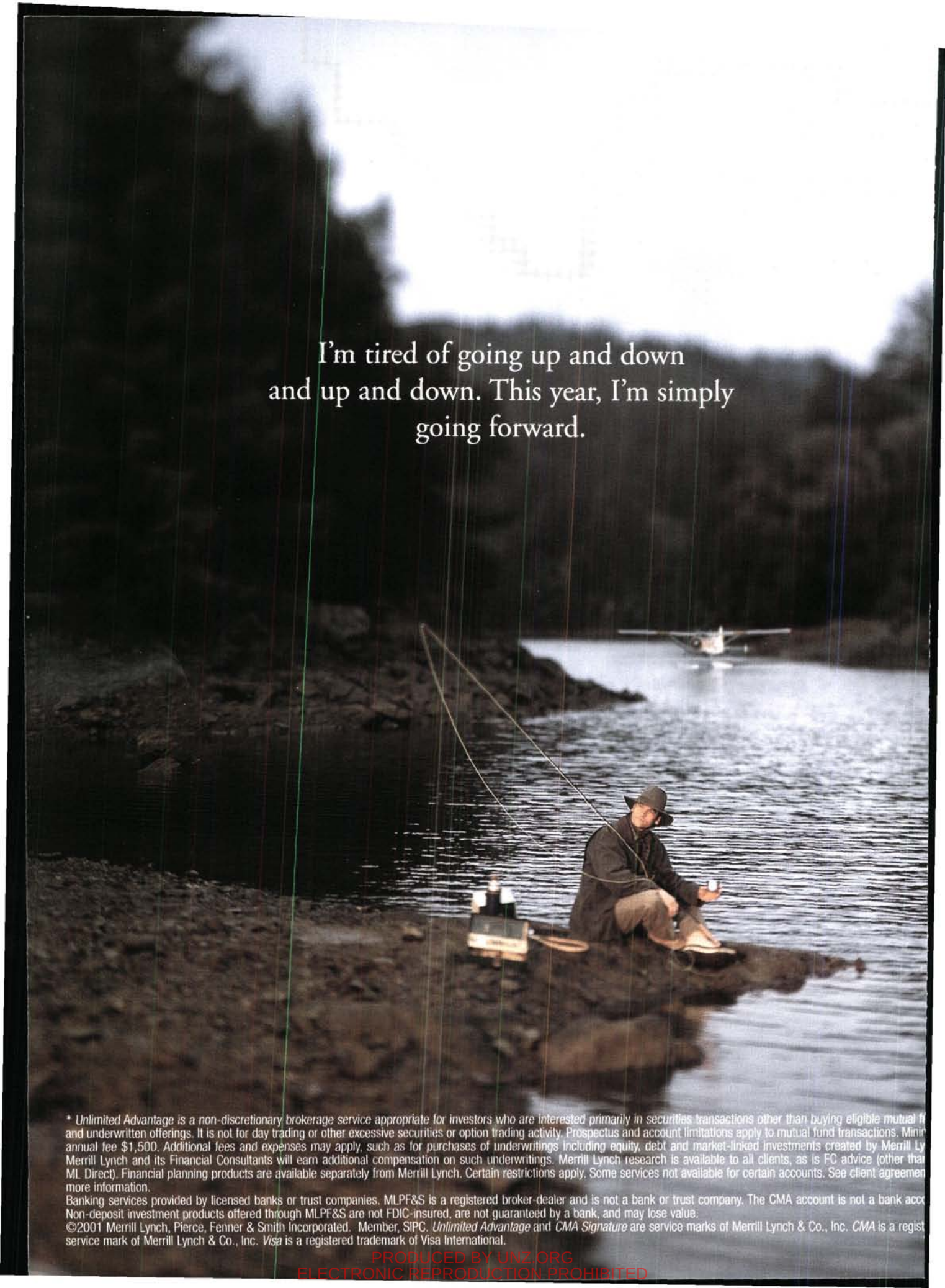
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A man in a hat and dark clothing is sitting on a rocky shore, fishing with a long rod. A small seaplane is visible on the water in the background. The scene is set against a backdrop of dark, forested hills under a bright sky.

I'm tired of going up and down
and up and down. This year, I'm simply
going forward.

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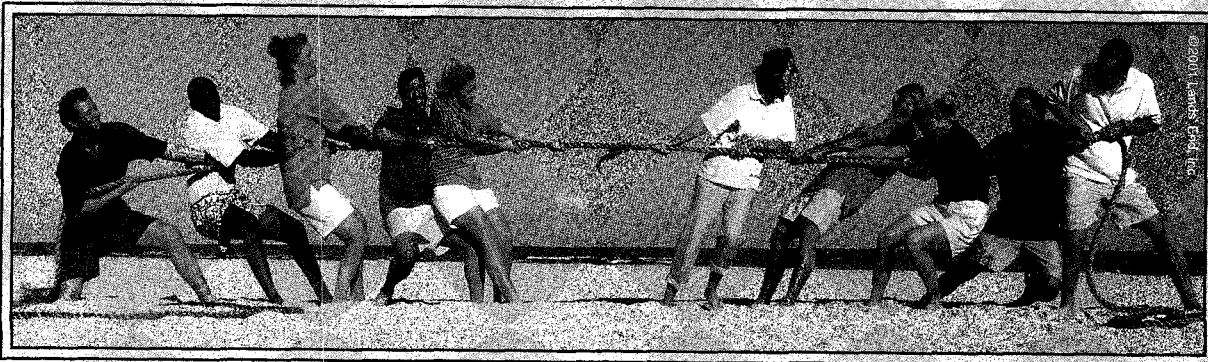
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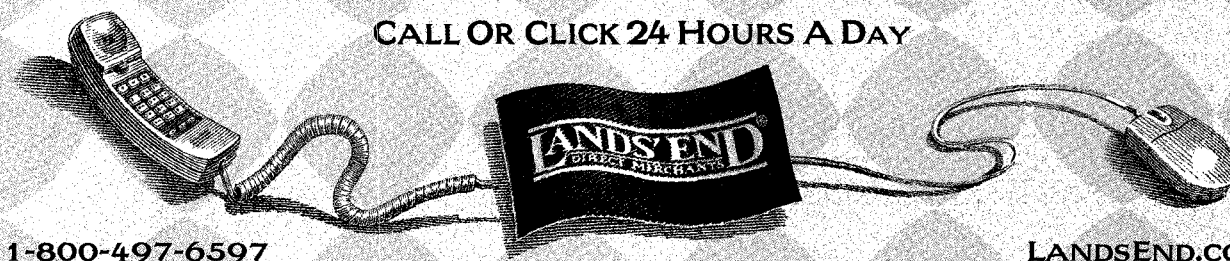
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THE Atlantic

VOLUME 287 NO. 6 / JUNE 2001

- 4** 77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET *by Michael Kelly*
6 IN THIS ISSUE
10 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
16 INNOCENT BYSTANDER **SECOND OPINIONS** *by Cullen Murphy*

NOTES & DISPATCHES

- 26** Reports from Cincinnati, Ohio; Astrakhan, Russia; Fort Belvoir, Virginia; Le Kef, Tunisia; and Torrington, Connecticut *by Wayne Curtis, Jeffrey Tayler, Richard Martin, Robert D. Kaplan, and Teller*
-

37 FREEDOM OF THE SKIES

Inventors, entrepreneurs, and government visionaries have teamed up to plan an escape from airline hell. The key: small, safe planes that can take off and land almost anywhere—connecting people directly with destinations, not with hubs *by James Fallows*

50 NEW WORLD SYNDROME

What happens when the traditional diet in a developing land is suddenly overwhelmed by Western plenty? The epidemic of obesity in Micronesia offers one answer *by Ellen Ruppel Shell*

54 GIVING "THE DEVIL" HIS DUE

Emmanuel Constant, whose savage Haitian militia committed countless atrocities, has been convicted in Haiti of murder. He remains a free man in New York City. Do his ties with U.S. intelligence explain why? *by David Grann*

- 76** THREE-WHEELER *A short story by Bobbie Ann Mason*

- 78** THE RAZOR *A poem by Donald Hall*

- 81** FAÇADE *A drawing by Guy Billout*
-

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

- 82** TRAVEL ASSISTED HIKING *by Barbara Wallraff*

- 85** DESIGN ARCHITECTURE FOR ART'S SAKE *by Ann Wilson Lloyd*

- 89** SPORT AS AMERICAN AS WOMEN'S SOCCER? *by Scott Stossel*

BOOKS & CRITICS

- 94** AN OMNIVOROUS CURIOSITY To Keep the Ball Rolling: The Memoirs of Anthony Powell *reviewed by Christopher Hitchens*

- 100** THE REAL WAR The Good Fight, by Stephen E. Ambrose *reviewed by Benjamin Schwarz*

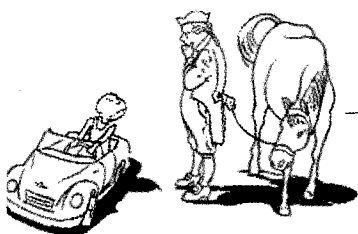
- 104** NEW & NOTEWORTHY The reissue of Agatha Christie's memoir, and new fiction from David Lodge, Richard Russo, Elizabeth Berg, and Simon Mawer

- 107** THE MISTRESS OF GLOOM The Bay of Angels, by Anita Brookner *reviewed by Miranda Seymour*

- 111** THE PUZZLER *by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon*

- 112** WORD FUGITIVES *by Barbara Wallraff*

Cover painting by Chris Gall; heading drawings throughout by Istvan Banyai



77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

In his second inaugural address Bill Clinton, in a play on a trope, declared, "Government is not the problem and government is not the solution." Afterward, on PBS, the historian Stephen E. Ambrose singled out the remark. "I don't know what that means," Ambrose replied impatiently. "The government was surely a solution in the Depression and in World War II and on the civil-rights front and on providing a decent life for old folks in this country." Ambrose's views on World War II can be misty (on which, see Benjamin Schwarz's review in this issue), but his response to Clinton was refreshingly blunt. And that response comes to mind in thinking about two major articles in this issue of *The Atlantic*.

The cover story, "Freedom of the Skies," by the magazine's national correspondent, James Fallows, reports on the development of a new generation of small airplanes, planes that are so extraordinarily advanced in their efficiency, safety, and, above all, cheapness, that they hold the promise of a revolution in air travel. In a matter of years these new planes will make it possible for most people to fly as only private pilots and the very rich can today—on our own schedules, in small planes, to and from small, uncrowded airports all around the country.

The men who invented and developed these new planes are fairly typical of what we think of as great innovators. They are driven by a lifelong passion, they are risk-takers, and, most important, they are *private* individuals. In the American self-image the inventor-as-hero is never a G-man; indeed, he is the antithesis of big government, to some degree the natural enemy of the G-man.

This is mostly myth. If we look at the great moments in innovation, the developments that changed everything, we almost always find that the private geniuses did their bit, but the great, clumsy, heavy hand of government is frequently what turned that bit into a new way of life. Ford gave us the cheap car, but Eisenhower gave us the interstate. Edison gave us the light bulb, but the TVA wired the farms. Most of the great advances in flight, and all the advances in space flight, have their origins in government—specifically, military—work. So, too, with the Internet, which rose out of the government's ARPANET system. It was government that linked America's coasts by rail, government

that constructed the Panama Canal, government that built all the really big stuff. The revolution in flight that Fallows describes came about not only because of the work of private geniuses but also because a bunch of bureaucrats at NASA pushed it, and because those bureaucrats were lucky to have had as their boss since 1992 an engineer named Daniel Goldin. As the administrator of NASA, Goldin championed the cause of the small-plane dreamers, synthesized and sold their ideas, and swung the great weight and force of the state behind their disparate individual efforts.

Another thing that governments can do more efficiently than private parties is overthrow other governments. In October of 1993 the U.S. government deployed the USS *Harlan County* on a peacekeeping mission to Haiti. The attempt failed, disastrously, because a local warlord named Emmanuel "Toto" Constant scared off the *Harlan County*

with a dockside mob. As it happens, Constant had since early 1992 been a paid informant of the CIA. Humiliating the *Harlan County* eventually cost him his government job. Still, he had provided helpful information. So, as David Grann reports in his article "Giving 'the Devil' His Due," when U.S. soldiers finally did arrive, they didn't arrest Constant; they protected him from the very many people who would have liked to seize him, and he

somehow managed to get out of Haiti and into the United States. He remains free in Queens, despite his recent conviction in absentia in a Haitian court on charges of murder. Toto Constant can tell us all about the power of big government.

.....

Next month *The Atlantic* will offer a long and previously unpublished story by Mark Twain, titled "A Murder, a Mystery, and a Marriage," together with a foreword and an afterword by Roy Blount Jr. The story, which was written for this magazine 125 years ago but never ran, comes to us by means of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, a major repository of Twain materials. During the past several months the library has been sponsoring a Mark Twain Writing Competition. Briefly, the library has posted the beginning of the story on its Web site (www.buffalolib.org) and is inviting participants to compose their own versions of the rest of it. Finalists will be judged by a distinguished panel of writers and scholars. The deadline for entries is June 1. —MICHAEL KELLY



James Fallows



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IN THIS ISSUE

Frustrated air travelers take heart—help is on the way. In this month's cover story, "Freedom of the Skies," **James Fallows** offers a look at the network of engineers and entrepreneurs working to devise ultra-safe, comfortable, and affordable small planes that could be the aviation industry's answer to taxicabs. Fallows is *The Atlantic*'s national correspondent. His article in this issue is drawn from his forthcoming book, *Free Flight: From Airline Hell to a New Age of Travel*, to be published this month by PublicAffairs.

When **Ellen Ruppel Shell** ("New World Syndrome"), an *Atlantic* correspondent, visited Kosrae, in Micronesia, last year, she found the population struggling with an epidemic of obesity-linked disease brought on by the island state's recent Westernization. For many in developing countries whose genes adapted long ago to survive famine, Ruppel Shell reports, the impact of a fatty Western diet can be lethal. Ruppel Shell, a co-director of the Knight Center for Science and Medical Journalism, at Boston University, is at work on a book about obesity. Her article on asthma appeared in *The Atlantic* last May.

Last November, Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, the founder of FRAPH, Haiti's most feared paramilitary organization, was convicted in absentia of murder for his involvement in a massacre in Haiti in 1994. Today he lives and works in Queens. **David Grann** ("Giving 'the Devil' His Due") investigates Constant's ties with U.S. intelligence, which may help to explain why Constant has not been returned to Haiti to face justice. Grann is a contributing editor of *The New Republic*.

Bobbie Ann Mason ("Three-Wheeler") is the author of numerous books, including the memoir *Clear Springs* (1999).

Mason's latest collection of short stories, *Zigzagging Down a Wild Trail*, will be published in August, along with a reissue of *Shiloh and Other Stories*, which won the 1983 Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award for First Fiction.

Each year, as high schools across the nation close for the summer break, rural and suburban homeowners brace themselves for the onslaught of mailbox baseball. **Wayne Curtis** ("Maginot Mailbox") reports from Cincinnati, Ohio, on the latest attempt to thwart would-be mailbox McGwires: commercially manufactured anti-vandal mailboxes. Also in Notes & Dispatches this month: **Jeffrey Tayler**, from Astrakhan, Russia, on why good caviar is becoming increasingly hard to find; **Richard Martin**, from Fort Belvoir, Virginia, on why simpler may be smarter when it comes to de-mining technology; **Robert D. Kaplan**, from Le Kef, Tunisia, on the Roman foundations of that nation's prosperity; and **Teller**, the shorter, quieter half of the noir comedy-magic team Penn & Teller, on why a tragic accident in Torrington, Connecticut, involving a young burn victim may not be all that it appears.

The immediate success of the architecturally daring Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, has prompted American art museums to embrace a new philosophy: if you build it, they will come. **Ann Wilson Lloyd** ("Architecture for Art's Sake") surveys the recent high-style building boom among art museums nationwide. Lloyd, a journalist and a curator, is the Boston corresponding editor for *Art in America* and a member of the International Association of Art Critics.

The launch of the Women's United Soccer Association represents the beginning of a new era both for soccer and for women's athletics. **Scott Stossel** ("As

American as Women's Soccer?") looks at how American feminism cuts across the grain of international sports culture. Stossel, the executive editor of *The American Prospect*, teaches about sports and culture at Trinity College, in Hartford, Connecticut. He is at work on a book about Sargent Shriver.

Perhaps no author other than Proust was as masterly a chronicler of remembrance as the celebrated British novelist Anthony Powell, the author of *A Dance to the Music of Time*. **Christopher Hitchens** ("An Omnivorous Curiosity") reviews the abridged reissue of Powell's extraordinary memoirs, *To Keep the Ball Rolling*. Hitchens, a columnist for *Vanity Fair* and *The Nation*, is the author of *Unacknowledged Legislation: Writers in the Public Sphere* (2000) and *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (2001).

The historian Stephen E. Ambrose's sentimental and flawed interpretation of America's role in World War II has come to define the way most Americans think about that war, says **Benjamin Schwarz** ("The Real War"), an *Atlantic* senior editor. Schwarz takes aim at the simplistic pieties of *The Good Fight*, Ambrose's new book for young adults, which, Schwarz fears, will likely mold yet another generation's understanding of World War II.

For the past twenty years the English novelist Anita Brookner has been leading her heroines and her readers toward an unflinching and pessimistic acceptance of life, observes **Miranda Seymour** ("The Mistress of Gloom"). This month Seymour reviews Brookner's latest novel, *The Bay of Angels*. Seymour's books include *Robert Graves: Life on the Edge* (1995) and a biography of Mary Shelley, which will be published in the United States this fall.

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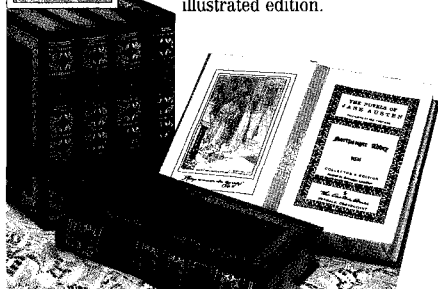
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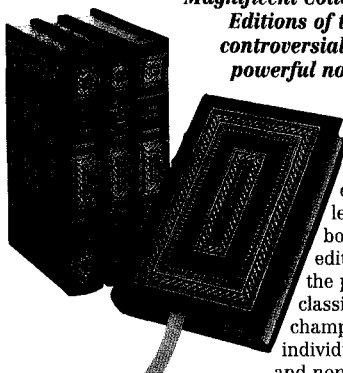
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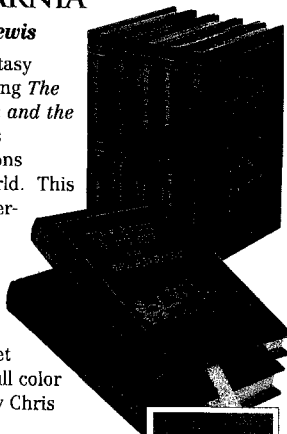
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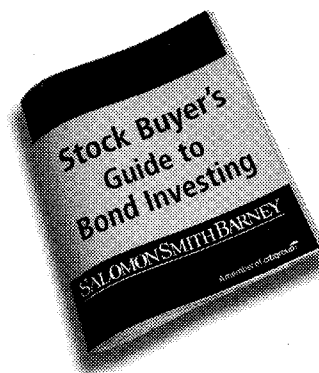
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The West Wing

In his "The Feel-Good Presidency" (March *Atlantic*), Chris Lehmann makes four basic claims about the NBC hit series *The West Wing*: the show is symptomatic of a "liberal retreat into political fantasy"; the fantasy advanced by the show dangerously links personal feeling with statecraft; that fantasy is nothing short of hero-worship; and that fantasy has mythologized Bill Clinton as "the President of Television."

Aside from the fact that the Bartlett archetype lacks the Clinton "priapic weakness," I worry about Lehmann's reasons for rebuking the rhetorical vision offered by *The West Wing*. Lehmann derides the show for wearing its own "stirring 'human' themes on its sleeve," for its "obsession with feeling." He says that the show forwards a "therapeutic vision of presidential politics ... that often renders policymaking indistinguishable from the conduct of an encounter group." He mocks the notion that a President would make any decision on the basis of "feeling."

Clinton is said to be charismatic because he seems to embody the virtue of caring when he speaks, because he seems to listen and to empathize when he converses. Empathy, care, listening—these are qualities that are stereotypically identified with women. Could Lehmann be condemning the rhetorical vision of *The West Wing* not only because of the disappointments of the Clinton years but also because it is a threat to "masculinity"?

Joshua Gunn
Minneapolis, Minn.

I am sincerely perplexed by how Chris Lehmann could possibly see the character Josiah Bartlett, in NBC's series *The West Wing*, as in any way defending the credibility of Bill Clinton as a President or as a person. Rather than creat-

ing a "cult of personality" around Bill Clinton, *The West Wing*, week after week, shows viewers who Bill Clinton could have been but wasn't.

Once again a conservative pundit tries to demonize liberalism and all liberals by any means necessary—even going as far as attempting to create a glaringly absurd false analogy in the form of a "Bartlett is really Clinton" critique of a superb television series.

Paul Brewer
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Wow, silly me. Before reading Chris Lehmann's review I thought *The West Wing* was one of the best entertainments on TV, with sharp, often funny dialogue, engaging characters, and just enough headline references to make it timely. Boy, was I wrong! It turns out the show is actually an embodiment of odious Clintonian liberalism, with its tepid political ambitions and emphasis on doing what feels right rather than what (presumably) is right. Thanks to Lehmann, I now realize that in enjoying *The West Wing* I've been intellectually shallow, culturally bereft, and politically naive.

Steve Whitney
Snohomish, Wash.

Chris Lehmann replies:

I am not now, nor have I ever been, a conservative, let alone (shudder) a pundit. I would suggest that the nation's politics have come to a curious pass when the act of criticizing Bill Clinton or his televisual idealization condemns one to both these cruel fates.

*Nor am I worked up over allegedly imperiled masculinity in *The West Wing*'s vision of the American presidency. The emotionally charged features of the show which I criticized aren't objectionable because they're somehow "feminine"—they're troubling because they lend themselves to all sorts of symbolic manipulation. Their regular deployment permits the very cold, clini-*

*cal exercises of executive power that Joshua Gunn properly questions to go unremarked in any setting of principled argument and public deliberation. I would remind Mr. Gunn that essentialism cuts both ways: Would he suggest that the thirteen women serving in the U.S. Senate, or countless others in other powerful walks of public life, are somehow unduly "mannish" or anxious about their feminine identities? As Bonnie Angelo has demonstrated in her recently published study *First Mothers*, many of America's most influential chief executives have been what earlier generations of gender essentialists called mama's boys.*

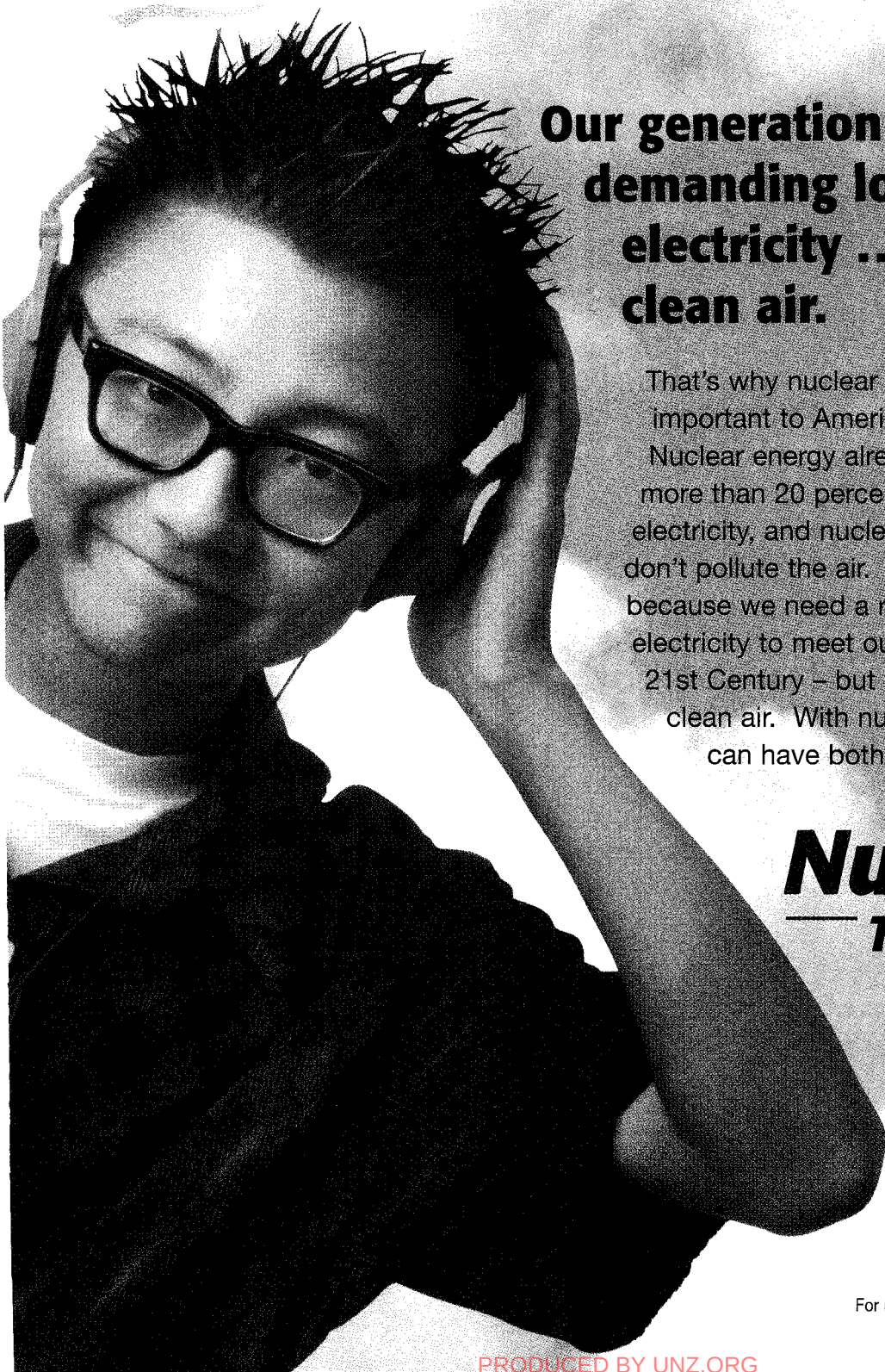
Raban's Northwest

With regard to Jonathan Raban's article "Battleground of the Eye" (March *Atlantic*), I would like to point out what I believe is a historical error: According to Raban, "By 1855 great tracts of the land that [George Catlin] had known as wilderness had been claimed for civilization by the barbed-wire fence." I don't believe that the barbed-wire fence was introduced or even invented until the 1870s. A much better date for this sentence would be 1885.

Michael Ludeman
Navasota, Texas

In his article on landscape art of the Pacific Northwest, Jonathan Raban suggests that a postcard featuring a Boeing bomber reflected Cold War tensions circa 1950. The plane shown in the photo, however, is one of the initial prototype YB-17s. First flown in 1935, they were already outdated by the beginning of World War II, by which time more-advanced versions of the famed bomber were flying. If the image was available at that time, it may have been seen as an indication of America's growing military might against the forces of fascism, not against Moscow. If it was in circulation

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after the war—when B-17s had long been replaced by swept-wing, A-bomb-carrying Boeing B-47s—the image would have been symbolic of technological superiority over no one.

*Gregory Paul
Baltimore, Md.*

Jonathan Raban replies:

I'm grateful for both these corrections: I really should have known about the barbed wire, having once explored its history; as for the aircraft, Gregory Paul's information came as news to me. The postcard in question is dated "c. 1950" in the book (Greetings From Washington) in which I found it, but in light of Mr. Paul's comments I'm inclined to think that it may well have been printed earlier than that.

Don't Call Us

Reading Jack Owens's piece "Don't Call Us" (March *Atlantic*), which bemoans the fact that the FBI cannot seem to hire black women, left me puzzled. First, nowhere does Owens suggest

that the functioning of the FBI is impaired by the lack of black women in its ranks. Second, he does seem to accept that the FBI's preference for candidates who have practiced law for a while and are about thirty is applied fairly. Third, and most important, it seems that the only reason that black female lawyers cannot be recruited by the FBI is that they are "snatched up by Wall Street firms and the best legal houses."

Owens does not suggest that the nation's law enforcement is harmed in any way by being in the hands of recruits "from police departments and the military." Nor does he suggest that the FBI's recruitment policy harms the prospects of black female lawyers (who are sought by the FBI, according to Owens, because they "can speak well and write well"). The only conclusion one can reach is that his objective is diversity for diversity's sake. Surely the fact that black female lawyers are doing so well is a reason for celebration and not concern.

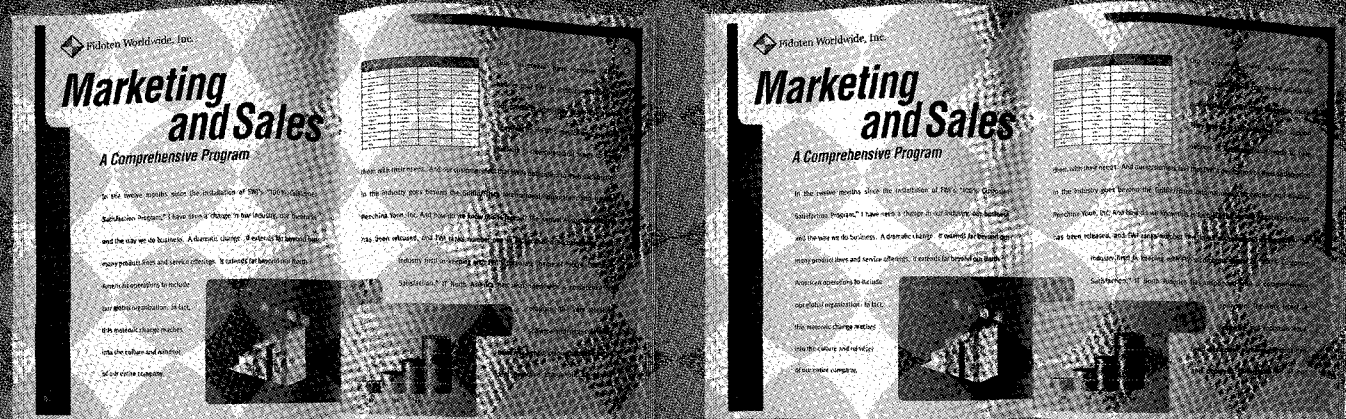
*Ram Mudambi
Blue Bell, Penn.*

It seems wasteful that well-educated black women should be encouraged to join a law-enforcement agency where they will be guaranteed anonymity by the nature of the job rather than be encouraged into the business and professional fields, where successful black women can be role models to encourage young black females to pursue educational goals that would lead to further improvement of the role of blacks in American society. Black female doctors, educators, corporate CEOs, and the like are surely more valuable to America today and in the future than lady coppers, however grand the FBI appears to be.

*Kenneth Bullock
Carmel, Calif.*

Louis Freeh is right, and his successors will do well to hire from an applicant pool that is seasoned and more likely to stick with the FBI and to maximize the returns to taxpayers on training investments. If that practice does not attract a politically correct work

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force, then the problem is in the work force, not in the hiring scheme.

W. L. Welch
Oakland, Md.

Jack Owens replies:

Ram Mudambi is correct in saying that black females are doing well in the legal profession, which is precisely why the FBI should be and is recruiting them. They are sought not simply for the sake of diversity but because law graduates are intelligent, mature, and skilled in communicating—attributes required of agents. Black female lawyers enrich the ranks of agents, as do those from other professions—military, police, or otherwise. The Bureau would like to have more black female law graduates, but its new policy of waiting to hire lawyers until they have established themselves in practice has unintentionally resulted in a significant shrinking of the applicant pool of female attorneys, many of whom would apply right after graduation if the Bureau would hire them then. Instead they go elsewhere and prosper, costing the FBI an impressive pool of applicants. As for Kenneth

Bullock's letter, what better way for black women to be role models than to prove themselves and advance in a male-dominated profession like law enforcement? Far from being anonymous, FBI agents are usually known in their communities as agents. Ambitious agents, male and female, rise to the head field offices and occupy prominent positions at headquarters, publicly representing the Bureau on important cases and getting singled out in the media for their accomplishments. The Bureau's work is often significantly shaped by the contributions of black female agents. I find no waste in that.

Director Louis Freeh wants black women in the FBI because many are skilled professionals. The Bureau is committed to recruiting them. Unfortunately, its hiring strategy is flawed and has failed to produce. It should be changed, which is why I wrote the article.

Lost Islands

"Lost Islands," by Richard Rubin (February *Atlantic*), is, at least in part, inaccurate and unfair. Claims to islands in the Central Pacific that were allegedly

misplaced by the State Department were, in fact, relinquished by the United States in a 1979 treaty with Kiribati. For the most part the U.S. claims were based on the Guano Act of 1856. Prior to Kiribati's independence, both the United States and the United Kingdom claimed the islands; the United States used Canton and Enderbury Islands for missile tracking, and both nations used Christmas Island to test nuclear bombs.

In 1979 I led the U.S. delegation that negotiated the treaty covering the fourteen islands in the Line and Phoenix groups in Kiribati. In addition to State Department representatives, the delegation included representatives of the Defense Department, the Commerce Department, the State of Hawaii, and the U.S. Territory of Samoa. We also consulted with Congress and the American tuna industry in drafting the treaty, which I signed in 1979.

Much to the joy of a few fringe groups like State Department Watch, a small group of conservative senators held up ratification for four years despite the

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overwhelming support of the Reagan Administration. Finally, in 1983, the disputed-islands treaties, including the U.S.-Kiribati Treaty, passed the Senate by a vote of 94-4. The treaty came into force on September 23, 1983.

*William Bodde Jr.
United States Ambassador (ret.)
Chevy Chase, Md.*

Richard Rubin replies:

I thank the ambassador for his letter, and although my piece was intended merely to present, not to settle, the controversy over who can rightfully claim these territories, I will gladly pass on this information to the concerned parties at the State Department—if I can figure out who they are.

Honoring War Dead

That Japan has the testicular fortitude to honor its World War II soldiers in spite of today's political correctness is to be applauded ("The Kamikazes Rise Again," by Murray Sayle, March *Atlantic*). But for Sayle to compare a government-financed sculpture of a jaunty young kamikaze pilot to a weathered statue of a humbled Confederate soldier is an uninformed attempt to link a states'-rights initiative with expansionist, imperialist totalitarianism. To further impugn Confederate submariners on the CSS *Hunley*, by linking their unselfish bravery to suicidal pilots, is an even greater insult to the memory of those Confederate sailors.

Sayle presupposed the revisionists' Big Lie: that his "brave men and women" of the Confederacy fought the war for a single reason—slavery. Although he does not plainly say that, he clearly means it. Although some of the men of the South certainly had the issue of slavery in mind as they marched to defend their country (as well as to repel an invading army, defend the pre-Fourteenth Amendment Constitution, win freedom from punishing taxes, and so on), one objective they definitely did not have in mind was imperialist expansion.

*Marshall Brown
Townville, S.C.*

The headline was tantalizing: "The Kamikazes Rise Again. This time, to help Japan confront its past." I plunged

into Murray Sayle's thoughtful piece on World War II suicide pilots eagerly. Had the Japanese suddenly atoned for their aggression in Asia, or at least begun to experience remorse? Not a bit. Not a word of Sayle's excellent article supports the headline, if by "confront" the headline writer meant "to face or oppose boldly, defiantly, or antagonistically" (the second of three definitions given in the nearest dictionary). Indeed, if one wishes to place the kamikaze memorials in the larger context of the Japanese viewing their past, it would surely be one of continuity rather than of change. The one permissible way to view World War II in Japan has been through the suffering of the Japanese people, as in a film like *The Burmese Harp*, which depicts Japanese soldiers starving in Southeast Asia. Kamikaze pilots and beautiful army nurses dying of tropical diseases are of a piece with this tradition.

*Susan Shin
Greenbrae, Calif.*

Murray Sayle replies:

My understanding is that the final breaking point between North and South was whether new states were to be admitted to the union as slaveholding or free-soil—that is, which side was to benefit from the future expansion of the United States. However, the parallel I saw between Japan and the former Confederacy—the only part of the English-speaking world to have known defeat and occupation in almost a thousand years—was not in their causes so much as in the continuing debate in both about what those causes were. Marshall Brown's letter confirms that there is no southern consensus 136 years after the Civil War: I looked carefully in the kamikaze exhibition in Tokyo for any word vindicating the Japanese cause, and found none. Japan, as Susan Shin indicates, still has a long way to go in addressing (if she prefers this to "confronting") the causes of a war that ended fifty-six years ago, much further to reach a consensus; but the interest of young people in the exhibit, and its lack of a partisan message, struck me as at least a start.

Credit to the FTC

In his essay discussing President Bill Clinton's economic accomplishments (February *Atlantic*) James Fallows cred-

its some of Clinton's most important economic advisers, including Joel Klein, the director of the antitrust division of the Justice Department, for the important roles they played in the Administration. He writes that "Klein famously led the antitrust case against Microsoft—while approving other forms of concentration (for example, AOL's merger with Time-Warner)." Although Klein certainly played a very important role in the Microsoft case, he had no official involvement in the investigation into AOL's merger with Time-Warner. Instead, the Federal Trade Commission, which shares responsibility with the Department of Justice to enforce noncriminal federal antitrust law, conducted the investigation and granted approval (subject to conditions) of AOL's merger with Time-Warner. The FTC is an independent agency, and an executive-branch official such as Klein would have no direct role in influencing the FTC's disposition of a merger investigation. This is a small factual error, to be sure, but many people at the FTC spent the better part of a year working on the AOL/Time-Warner matter, and their efforts should not be overlooked.

*Randall Long
Great Falls, Va.*

James Fallows replies:

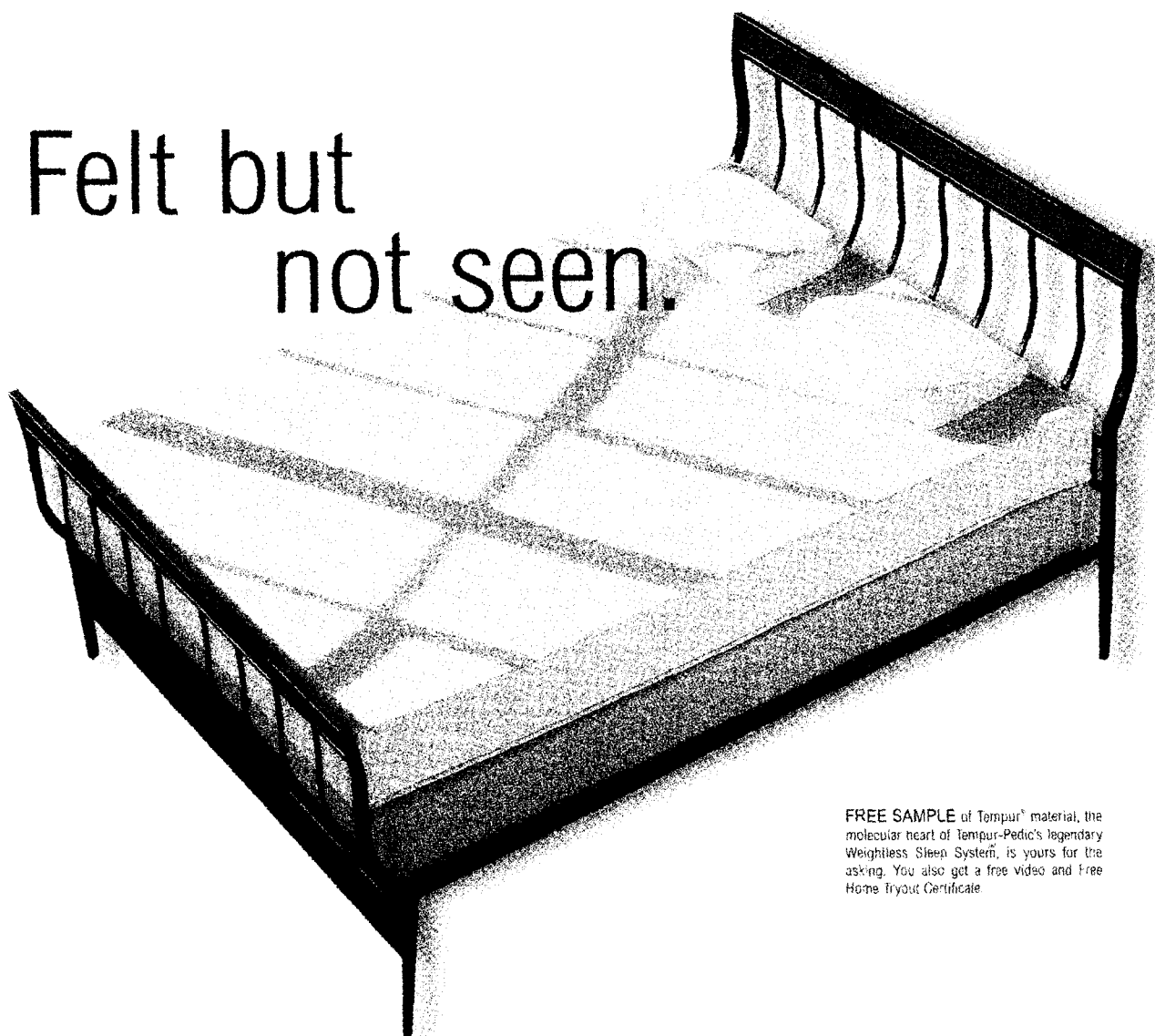
The Justice Department influenced the Clinton Administration's overall view of antitrust, including the AOL case. But I should have included Robert Pitofsky, the chairman of the Federal Trade Commission since early 1995, on the list of Clinton appointees who had shaped and administered an effective economic policy.

Advice & Consent

"Shock and Disbelief," by Daniel Smith (February *Atlantic*), was a major contribution to the treatment of individuals with severe psychiatric disorders. Electroconvulsive therapy has been badly underused, to the detriment of our patients, because of opposition to it by Scientologists and other anti-psychiatry groups. Your story was scientifically correct, which is much more important than being politically correct.

*E. Fuller Torrey, M.D.
Bethesda, Md.*

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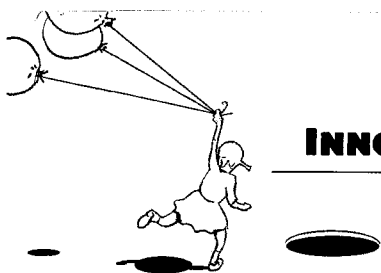
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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

by CULLEN MURPHY

SECOND OPINIONS

*History winds up in
the waiting room*

.....

If the story were presented as a formal medical case study, it might begin as follows:

S. is a thirty-five-year-old male of Middle Eastern ancestry with a long history of deceitfulness, physical violence, and other forms of unacceptable behavior. He is an only child; his mother had to be warned not to drink during pregnancy. The subject is known to be inordinately fastidious about his hair. His libido is powerful and indiscriminate. He is a nonsmoker. His life is believed to have culminated in a spectacular murder-suicide.

The case is that of Samson, son of Manoah, whose story is recounted in the biblical book of Judges, and it was cited not long ago in a letter to the editor of the *Archives of General Psychiatry*. The authors, led by Eric Lewin Altschuler, of the University of California at San Diego, suggest that Samson probably suffered from what would today be called anti-social-personality disorder, or ASPD. They note that psychiatry's official *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* requires that three out of seven criteria be met in order to advance a diagnosis of ASPD, and that Samson's behavior met six of them. He was aggressive and impulsive. ("And he found a fresh jawbone of an ass, and put out his hand and seized it, and with it he slew a thousand men.") He was cruel to small animals. ("So Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took torches; and he turned them tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails.") He lied and he stole. He preened and he gloated. He clearly manifested, according to the doctors, a "failure to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behavior."

If you're like me, you probably don't settle down with the latest issue of the *Archives of General Psychiatry* or *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery* or *Genitourinary Medicine* the instant it arrives. And yet anyone now catching up on medical literature from the past few years can't help being struck by the vast amount of attention devoted to intriguing cases from long ago. Large numbers of living Americans may have difficulty gaining access to decent health

or cystic fibrosis; and that Mozart was done in by streptococcus, not by Salieri. An article in *Clinical Toxicology* argues that the Emperor Julian the Apostate and his successor, the Emperor Jovian, each experienced an episode of carbon-monoxide poisoning caused by the use of burning coals to heat a poorly ventilated room. (Julian recovered; Jovian, who had gone to bed in a drunken stupor, never woke up.) King Herod the Great underwent an unhappy demise.

The chronicler Flavius Josephus, in *The Jewish War*, observed, "Dis-temper seized upon his whole body, and greatly disordered all his parts with various symptoms; for there was a gentle fever upon him, and an intolerable itching over all the surface of his body, and continual pains in his colon, and dropsical tumors about his feet." A closely reasoned analysis in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* provides a diagnosis: "end-stage



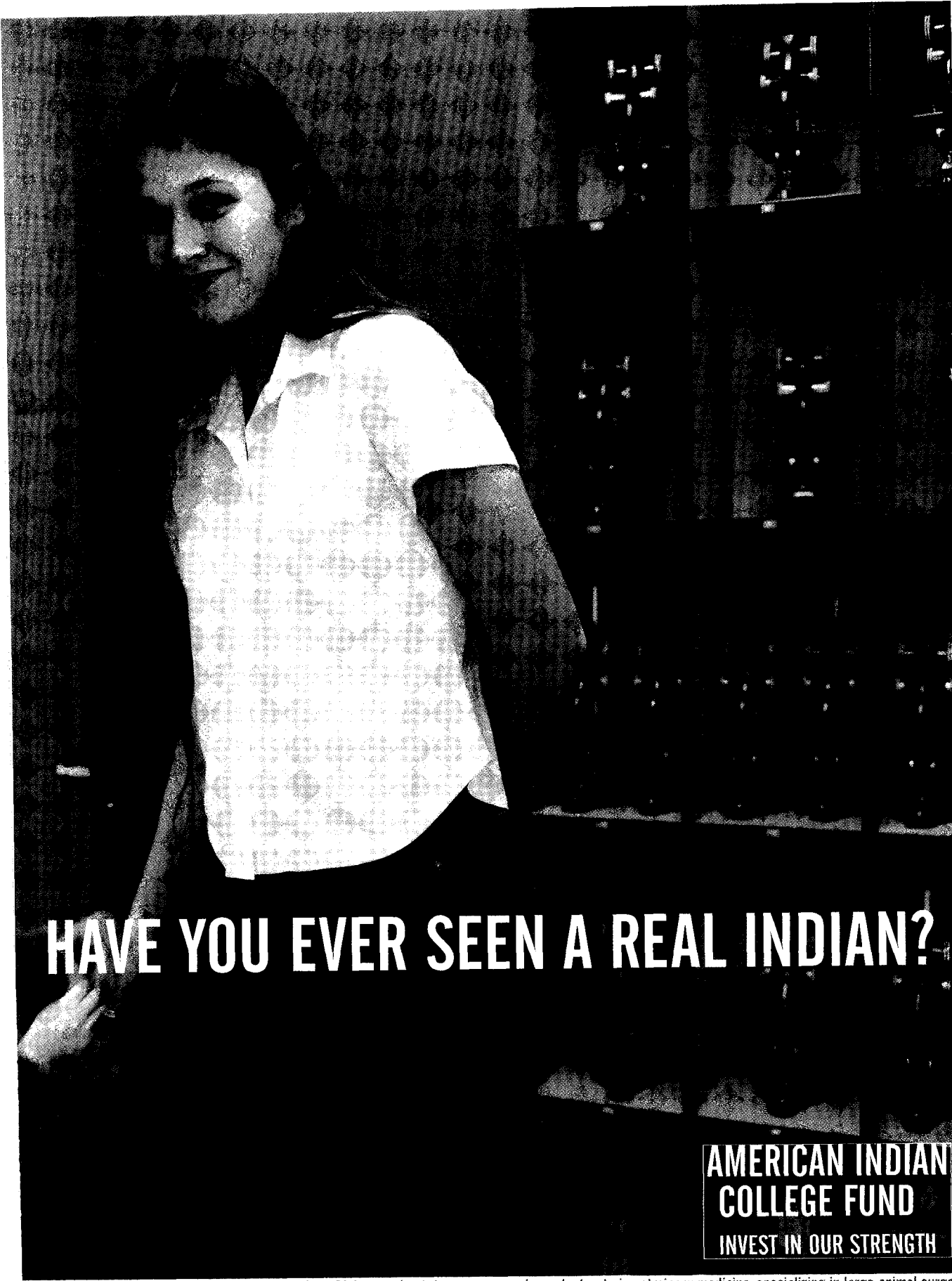
care, but if you happen to be a deceased historical personage, your chances of attracting first-rate medical attention are getting better all the time.

Physicians of yore did not always have a clear understanding of the ailments that afflicted their patients, but they left clues that have encouraged later speculation. Investigations by modern doctors have suggested that Catherine the Great suffered from syphilis, that Kant suffered from Alzheimer's, and that Brahms suffered from sleep apnea; that Van Gogh and Saint Teresa of Avila were afflicted with temporal-lobe epilepsy; that Chopin was felled by emphysema

type II diabetes mellitus."

The medical profession has long been home to a peculiar breed of hobbyist-detectives, most of whom work independently. They have started to find one another. For the past seven years the University of Maryland School of Medicine and the Baltimore VA Medical Center have hosted an annual "historical clinico-pathologic conference," the centerpiece of which is a case study of a medical mystery drawn from the history books. Each case study is handled by a designated investigator. "E.P. is a 40-year-old man who was brought to the emergency

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room in early October for evaluation of lethargy and confusion." Thus began the discussion, in 1995, of the case of Edgar Allan Poe. (The investigator that year, R. Michael Benitez, ventured the contrarian argument that Poe succumbed to rabies encephalitis, not to the effects of heavy drinking.) In 1996 the mystery case began like this:

A 32-year-old man presented with fever and pain in the right upper quadrant. The patient had been well until the day after a night of heavy alcohol consumption (12 pints of wine), when fatigue and generalized aches developed ... The patient was a native of northern Greece and was active in military service. He had traveled extensively through Asia Minor and the Middle East and to the Indian frontier. He had been married twice and was bisexual.

So: what brought an end to Alexander the Great? In the view of the investigator, it was "*Salmonella typhi* enteritis, complicated by bowel perforation and ascending paralysis."

One sub-branch of historical clinico-pathology involves looking for evidence of illness in works of art. A recent letter to the editor of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* points out the "attenuation of the outer third of the eyebrows" in contemporary portraits of Henry VIII and wonders whether the English King might have suffered from myxedema, a thyroid condition whose complications may include impotence and mental deterioration. A haunting item in *The New England Journal of Medicine* last fall drew attention to the misshapen marble breast on the allegorical female figure *Night*, by Michelangelo, in the Medici Chapel in Florence. The authors, an oncologist and an art historian, speculated that the woman used as a model was suffering from advanced breast cancer.

Literature, too, has come under newly intensive medical scrutiny. I remember once, years ago, attending a lecture at a gathering of Sherlockian scholars in Washington, D.C., at which a distinguished local pathologist went on for an hour about the possible ailments afflicting young Jack Ferguson in "The Adventure of the Sussex Vam-

pire." (Conan Doyle, writing in the voice of Dr. Watson, had provided some clues. For instance: "The boy went off with a curious, shambling gait which told my surgical eyes that he was suffering from a weak spine.") An article in *The Lancet* in 1998 called attention to a case of "Alice in Wonderland syndrome," involving a patient's distorted perception of the size of personal body parts. Could the fantastical experience of Lewis Carroll's Alice be attributable to "ischaemia of distal parts of both anterior cerebral arteries"? Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* is the subject of a remarkable recent article by Bard C. Cosman, in the journal *Diseases of the*

plague—and gone on to grind Jerusalem into dust?

The same sort of question could profitably be applied to literature. The medical investigation of pathology in fiction as yet lags far behind its counterpart in history, so "What if ... ?" has not been as frequently asked. But given the role of illness and death in literature, the field is potentially enormous. To be sure, many of world literature's most famous plots would not survive an encounter with antibiotics and the rest of the modern pharmacopoeia, but the stories would be free to evolve in happier directions. What if Oliver Twist's mother had survived childbirth?

What if Beth, in *Little Women*, had enjoyed access to penicillin? What if Raskolnikov and Ophelia had known about Prozac? What if streptomycin had obviated the need for that tuberculosis sanatorium in *The Magic Mountain*?

Even the characters in a work as innocent as *Winnie-the-Pooh* may be long overdue for their checkups. Last December, Sarah E. Shea, a pediatrician, and several colleagues published an article in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* titled

"Pathology in the Hundred Acre Wood: A Neurodevelopmental Perspective on A. A. Milne." The authors contend that Pooh shows signs of "comorbid cognitive impairment" and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. Eeyore is given a diagnosis of "chronic dysthymia." Piglet "suffers from a Generalized Anxiety Disorder." Tigger exhibits "a recurrent pattern of risk-taking behaviours." The article recommends a variety of interventions, from methylphenidate (Pooh) to fluoxetine (Eeyore) to paroxetine (Piglet) to clonidine (Tigger).

Medical science can do nothing now for Catherine the Great or Mozart. But literary characters are, in a sense, immortal. And for them, help may be on the way. ▀



Colon & Rectum, which persuasively pinpoints the location of the French King's fistula, the cure for which is an important element of the plot.

"Disease has to be counted as one of the wild cards of history," the historian Robert Cowley writes, "an unforeseen factor that can, in a matter of days or weeks, undo the deterministic sure thing or humble the conquering momentum." Historians have long indulged a taste for counterfactual history—for asking "What if ... ?" questions, many of which hinge on medical issues. What if earlier intervention had arrested the throat cancer of Germany's Frederick III—thereby delaying Wilhelm's accession to the throne? What if Sennacherib's army had escaped the

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by Bob Blumenthal and Charles M. Young

LEADING THE BLIND

When you've been singing together for sixty-three years, as the Blind Boys of Alabama have been doing since meeting at the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, in Talladega, in 1939, you need to think in terms of marketing some of that fine old wine in a flashy new bottle. This the Blind Boys have done on *Spirit of the Century* (Real World Records), the flashy new bottle taking the form of some world-class blues and folk musicians like David Lindley and John Hammond on guitar, Charlie Musselwhite on blues harp, and Danny Thompson on bass. They manage to achieve maximum swing with minimum fuss, hitting the right notes, all the right notes, and nothing but the right notes on twelve songs that range from surprisingly re-worked classics ("Amazing Grace" is sung over the chord progression from "House of the Rising Sun") and more contemporary (and ironic?) gospel like "Way Down in the Hole," by Tom Waits, and "Just



FOUNDING FATHERS FOUNTAIN, CARTER, AND SCOTT

Wanna See His Face," by the Rolling Stones. The main appeal, though, is first and foremost the Blind Boys, led by Clarence Fountain, who can rasp and roar and carry a melody with formidable authority. If he says Jesus is coming back soon, the matter is settled and that's all there is to it. Atheists will groove on his enthusiasm, agnostics

will harmonize with believers, and heathens all over the world will flop on the floor and have Saul-on-the-road-to-Damascus revelations. The final cut, "The Last Time" (which the Stones turned to their purposes in the mid-1960s), is a stunning a cappella reminder that any moment can be your last, so appreciate the moment you have now. —C.M.Y.



THEY: TONY DANILSKY; BOTTOM: REAL WORLD RECORDS

JAZZ SQUARED

The switched-on sensibilities of pop-jazz are rarely compatible with the more elevated inventions identified with the music's acoustic mainstream. A few intrepid souls manage to straddle these lines, and Marcus Miller may be the most intrepid of all. Miller, who gained his first notoriety twenty years ago with Miles Davis, has few rivals when it comes to slapping out funky lines on his primary instrument, the electric bass. Few other electric bassists, however, are equally comfortable on such instruments as the bass clarinet, or can create (and play most of the parts on) orchestral settings of their own design. On *M²* (Telarc), Miller brings these talents to bear on a program that is eclectic to say the least, as the Raphael Saddiq vocal on the original pop song "Boomerang" follows a meditative reading of John Coltrane's "Lonnie's Lament," and a hard-charging cover of Talking Heads' "Burning Down the House" is succeeded by the Brazilian-flavored "It's Me Again." The album is loaded with guest stars, and saxophonists Kenny Garrett and James Carter almost upstage their host with intrepid cameos; yet Miller remains the focal point. His arrangements are visceral and graceful, with synthesizers and drum programs coexisting alongside woodwinds and cellos, while his theme statements and solos on electric bass display virtuosity without abandoning a strong melodic focus or a deep groove. The disparate moods of *M²* are linked by an overriding upbeat attitude that suggests a younger Quincy Jones who can provide his own killer solos. —B.B.

CRISP NOTES

The pianist Marilyn Crispell has worked in the realm of free jazz for the past two decades. Her playing is often described as lyrical, and was always less relentless than that of avant-garde avatar Cecil Taylor; but it has only been since Crispell joined forces with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Paul Motian that the lyrical aspects of her style have fully emerged. *Amaryllis* (ECM), the second effort by the Crispell/Peacock/Motian trio, is a contemplative program of original compositions and collective improvisations in which the attentiveness of the musicians to each other is almost audible. Peacock and Motian helped lay the foundation for such affinity when they worked as a unit with Bill Evans and then Paul Bley in the 1960s, and they remain expert at making music breathe in natural, if not conventionally symmetrical, cycles. Crispell, to her credit, does not imitate her partners' former partners, finding her own way through the disc with a glowing touch and looping variations that establish their own considered momentum. The tautness inherent in such closely argued music is enhanced by the program's balance of concise written lines and the more floating collages. When the trio does let loose, on "December Greenwings" and "Rounds," Crispell is able to approach the explosive impact of her previous work without raising her voice. —B.B.

BOB BLUMENTHAL IS A JAZZ CRITIC FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE. CHARLES M. YOUNG REVIEWS MUSIC FOR PLAYBOY AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS AND FOR ALLMUSIC.COM.

DANCE & THEATER

by Nancy Dalva and John Istel

DEEP STRUCTURES

If you haven't felt the earth move under your feet in the theater lately, stop by Seattle's Intiman Theatre (June 8–July 7). At one point during the awkwardly titled *R. Buckminster Fuller: The History (and Mystery) of the Universe*, audiences stand to feel the rotation of "spaceship earth," a term coined by the titular polymath, environmentalist, and utopian. But the central thrill to expect at the ninety-minute one-man show is Ron Campbell's cosmic-caliber performance. His quirky and comic impersonation pays better homage to Fuller's kind of idiosyncratic American autodidacticism (he was kicked out of Harvard twice) than the script, which as written and directed by D. W. Jacobs chaotically rambles through Fuller's theories on geodesic domes, octahedrons, and synergetics, among other topics. Campbell serves as the show's "trimtab," the tiny steering device on a ship's rudder which Fuller co-opted as the symbol for an individual's place on the great ship of state. (In fact, "Call me Trimtab" serves as Fuller's epitaph.) And the combination of Campbell's performance and Fuller's increasingly cult-like status has led to acclaim since the show opened in San Diego more than a year ago. Subsequently, the production, according to Campbell, "turned away twenty people a night from the waiting list in San Francisco." At Chicago's Mercury Theater, the improv-accustomed audiences ate up the interactive aspect of the play—Bucky scoots all over the house, asking audience members to participate, turning the theater into a slightly wacky college seminar. Ultimately, it's a class in the seemingly lost art of American intellectual audacity, a course well worth retaking this summer in Seattle. —J.I.

FORWARD STEPS

From time to time, I run across a balletomane who is bemused, or outright vexed, or feels betrayed by the turn Mikhail Baryshnikov has taken late in his dancing career. These fans don't understand why one of the greatest danseurs of his day has founded a troupe dedicated to American modern dance. But the truth is, Baryshnikov didn't have to defect to be a ballet star. He could have danced his Albrechts and his Siegfrieds and the like with his mother company, the great Kirov Ballet of Saint Petersburg, and known the same great acclaim he has known here. But to dance what he is dancing now, Baryshnikov had to come to America. His White Oak Dance Project is dedicated not only to shining the light of his fame on contemporary choreographers of greater and lesser note, but also to exploring where modern dance has been. To that end, White Oak (with postmodern papa David Gordon serving as Director/Performances) has amassed a quite amazing repertory of postmodern works from the last forty years, billed under the rubric "PASTForward." With two new works and a revival by Deborah Hay and golden oldies from Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, and David Gordon, the affair is a real hippie hit parade. (Each multimedia performance features a selection from the rep.) To see happy new audiences sit forward in their seats and see it for the first time is simply a joy. (June 5–9, Brooklyn Academy of Music; 718-636-4100.) —N.D.

HEADLINING HEDDAS

"Do it beautifully," Ibsen's protean heroine, Hedda Gabler, urges Lovborg, her former beau, when she hands him one of her father's pearl-handled dueling pistols. Of course, Lovborg doesn't "do it" with any style at all—he shoots himself in the guts—and so disgusts Hedda that she turns the other pistol on herself. Nevertheless, Hedda's exhortation could be read as Ibsen's offstage whisper to generations of actresses who have attempted to scale the title role, rightly revered as an Andean peak of female performance, if not the Everest. This month, the hills are alive with Heddass. The most visible production stars Kate Burton under Nicholas Martin's direction. It received such rapturous reviews in Massachusetts last season that it's headed to Broadway this fall. In the meantime, a pair of intrepid actors scale Hedda this month: Martha Plimpton portrays the haughty general's daughter for Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company (June 28–August 19), while Judith Light takes on

the role for the Shakespeare Theatre, in Washington, DC, under Michael Kahn's direction (June 5–July 29). Both productions serve further notice that film actress Plimpton (*200 Cigarettes*) and TV sitcom star Light (*Who's the Boss?*) are more determined than ever to center their careers on the stage: Plimpton has become a full member of Steppenwolf's esteemed ensemble, and Light starred in the national tour of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize winner, *Wit*. Today, all too often, when performers forsake more financially lucrative jobs in film and television for the challenge of the theater, managers and agents echo Ibsen's famous curtain line from *Hedda Gabler*: "People just don't do such things." —J.I.

NANCY DALVA'S ESSAYS APPEAR IN THE MAGAZINE TWICE.
JOHN ISTEL IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF STAGEBILL.



JUDITH LIGHT,
IN SHAKESPEARE
THEATRE'S
PRODUCTION
OF HEDDA
GABLER

CAROL ROSEGG



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CLASSICAL MUSIC

by Austin Baer

DUST TO DUST

Ask not for whom the bell tolls. The Michelangesque choral fresco best known as the "Verdi Requiem" is resounding in churches and concert halls everywhere this year to commemorate the centennial of the death of its composer. In fact, Verdi wrote it in honor of Italy's great nationalist novelist and poet Alessandro Manzoni. But the origins of the work go back further. In 1868, four days after the death of Gioacchino Rossini, composer of *The Barber of Seville*, *Moses*, and *William Tell* (among much else), Verdi proposed a requiem mass for the illustrious deceased consisting of individual movements by Italy's "most eminent" composers. How eminent? Of the dozen recruited (in addition to Verdi himself), contemporary audiences will recognize not one. Yet each did his part, and a two-hour homage to Rossini resulted. For tangled reasons—this was Italy—the planned performances failed to materialize. Verdi was not the only contributor to recycle his part within a larger composition of his own, and his staggering "Libera me" duly made its way into the requiem for Manzoni. But the forgotten patchwork *Messa per Rossini* only saw the light in 1988, in Parma. On June 22, Helmuth Rilling, the conductor on that occasion, dusts it off as the opening concert of his Oregon Bach Festival, in Eugene, which by no means confines itself to Bach. The event is one bookend in a two-part Verdi tribute that concludes on closing night, July 8, with the immortal work its creator called the *Messa da Requiem*. (Box office: 541-682-5000.)



A BEAUTY AWAKENS

For the past half century, the heroines of Richard Strauss have known no more constant Prince Charming than John Crosby, founder and general director emeritus of the Santa Fe Opera. A privileged half dozen—Salome, Elektra, Ariadne, and Arabella, in the operas that bear their names; the Marschallin, in *Der Rosenkavalier*; perhaps the Countess of *Capriccio*—have the run of stages everywhere. But under the blazing dome of the New Mexico sky, the whole sorority has awakened to Crosby's kiss. Several of the incandescent sleepers hail from Greek myth, which Strauss tended to view through a magic, turn-of-the-century prism that bathed antiquity in a golden haze. This year, his Helen of Troy gets her turn with a rare staging of *Die Aegyptische Helena* (The Egyptian Helen). According to one revisionist tradition, there were two Helens: the true one, who remained chaste, and sat out the Trojan War in Egypt; and a phantom adulteress, who shared her bed with the unsuspecting prince Paris. The opera posits a single Helen, who tries to sell her husband this exact bill of goods once the Greeks have won the war. She succeeds temporarily, and in

a voluptuous passage exults at the bliss of her "second wedding night." But eventually, Helen's future happiness must be put on a more truthful footing. At Santa Fe, it is the lustrous soprano Christine Brewer who undertakes this tricky journey, of course under Crosby's baton. (July 21–August 15; 800-280-4654.)

CAST MEMBERS OF
DAS RHEINGOLD, IN
THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG

THE PENDULUM SWINGS

A generation or so ago, Seattle was the reactionary Wagnerite's last refuge. Elsewhere, any opera company capable of mounting *The Ring of the Nibelung*—that four-night epic of universal corruption and redemption—was taking some radical, iconoclastic approach. Only on Puget Sound could you still see the rivers and forests, the dwarfs and giants, the old Norse mythology of Wagner's story. With the arrival of Speight Jenkins as general director of the Seattle Opera in 1983, the company soon swept its drinking horns and bear pelts away in favor of a spiffy postmodern *Ring* of its own, directed by François Rochaix. (Around the same time, the Metropolitan Opera—alone among world-class institutions—took over the conservative franchise.) Now Seattle is embarked on a new cycle, which reaches completion

this summer. The director is Stephen Wadsworth, who has perpetrated a concept or two in his time but now reverts to tradition. "The look of the show is real," he says. "Nature is real. I'm trying to realize the piece in the terms of its creation." Perhaps even more important, Wadsworth's aim is fresh dramatic truth, with every character on the stage thoroughly involved in every scene at every moment. "That kind of specificity," he observes, "is something this material hasn't enjoyed much lately." And it makes all the difference. The bad news: this summer's three cycles (August 5–26) are sold out, and the next reprise isn't until 2005. The good news: there are always returns. Call the box office (206-389-7676), and keep ringing.

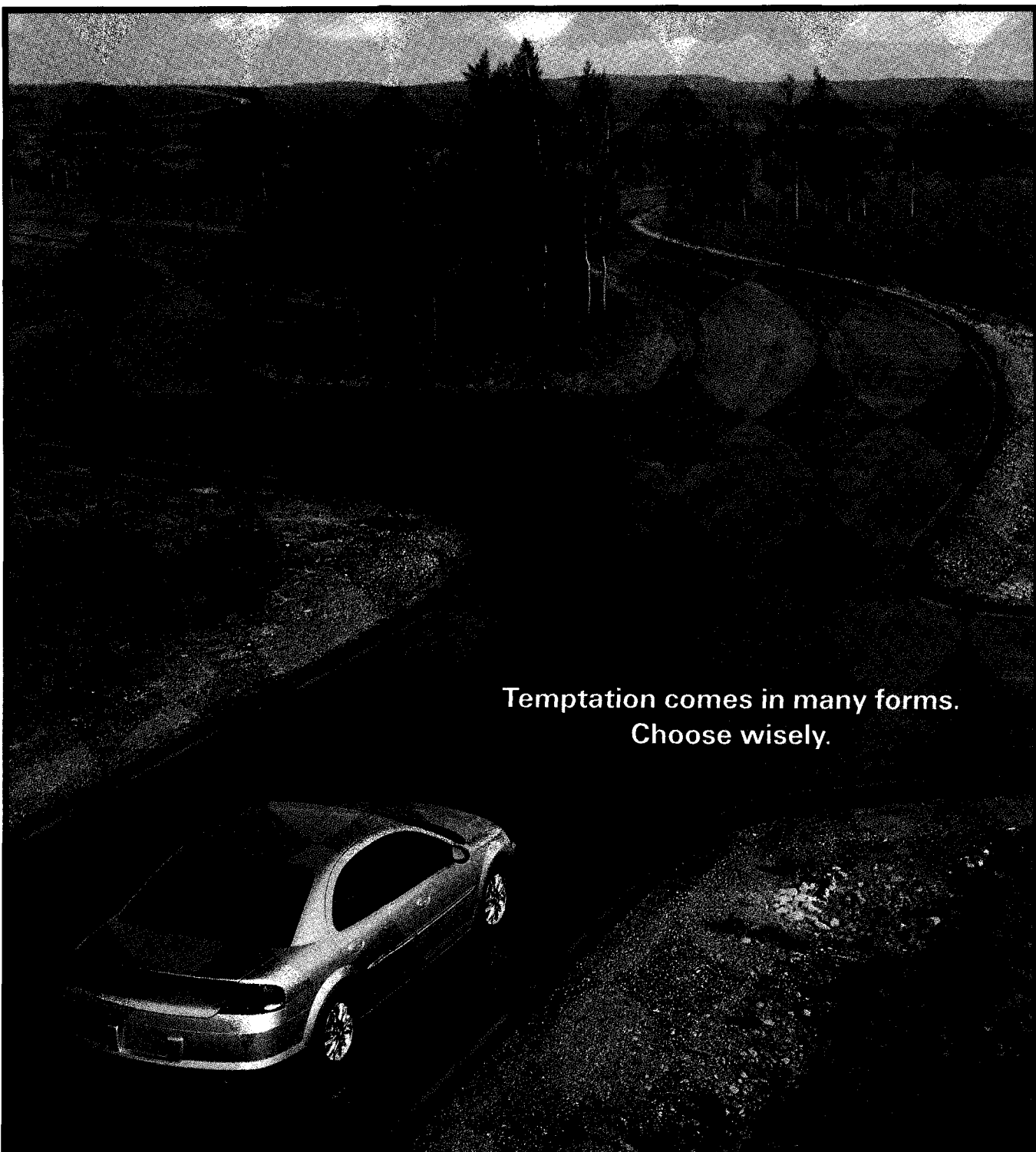
AUSTIN BAER IS A WRITER BASED IN NEW YORK.

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NOTES & DISPATCHES

CINCINNATI, OHIO

MAGINOT MAILBOX

Bat-hoisting vandals, beware

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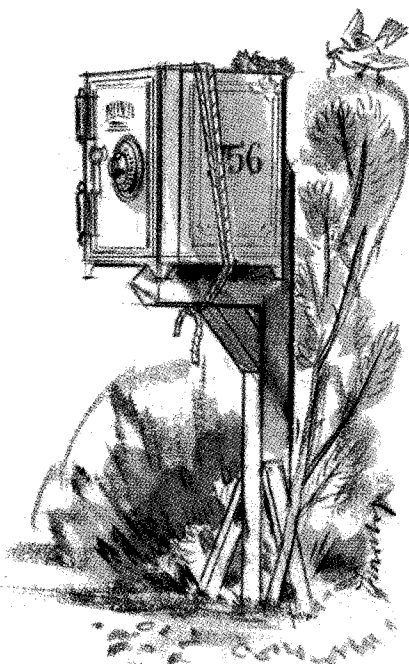
About twenty miles east of Cincinnati is a narrow, winding lane that features a handsome covered bridge and curves along a creek, through a valley of meadows and wooded hills. A few discordant trophy homes appear here and there, but it's a mostly pastoral landscape, with unassuming ranch houses, some horse paddocks, and modest fields of corn and soybeans.

It wasn't the bucolic charm that struck me, however, when I drove along the lane last winter. It was the desperate state of the mailboxes along the road. Most were battered and bent; a number were doorless and listing sharply to one side. A green-plastic mailbox appeared to have been doused with a volatile fluid and set aflame; one post sat decapitated. About half a dozen mailboxes were bungee-corded to their posts, allowing the owners to take them in each day after the mail has been delivered and then set them out afresh the next morning.

As suburban quality-of-life crimes go, mailbox vandalism ranks somewhere above blue jays' eating all the bird food and below teenagers' driving a sport utility vehicle across a muddy lawn. But as anyone who has been so victimized will tell you, it's a heartfelt issue. A mailbox is a very personal thing—it's the foreign office of one's home, into which uniformed couriers entrust sensitive financial documents and the occasional handwritten communiqué. To walk down the driveway and discover one's box crushed and canted, its door lying in the road ten yards away, produces complicated feelings of despair and vengefulness. At that moment an aggrieved homeowner understands,

in a small way, how Margaret Thatcher must have felt when the Argentines occupied the Falkland Islands.

I had been invited on a driving tour of the area by Richard Lee, who lives on the lane. Lee, as it happens, sells mailboxes through a Web site (www.steelmailbox.com). His own mailbox is constructed of twelve-gauge steel. It has a small dent in one corner, apparently made by a tire iron, but it remains fully functional. Although mailbox van-



dalism occurs in many areas of the country, this tour and a later drive suggested that the region around Cincinnati is home to an especially persistent class of bat-wielding hooligans. When I asked Lee why, he replied simply, "We produced Pete Rose."

Some have attributed a surge in this form of vandalism to the 1986 Rob Reiner movie *Stand By Me*, which featured a scene of teens playing mailbox baseball, in which a moving car serves as the batter's box and a mailbox becomes the fastball. (Reiner included a

disclaimer in the credits, noting that the activity was illegal.) History fails to support this theory, however. Mailbox vandalism has been going on "ever since there was a bat, a mailbox, and a car," says Tom Boyle, a spokesperson for the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. In a 1937 how-to book titled *1001 Ways to Use Concrete*, I found an illustration of a mailbox encased in an elaborate concrete pillar. The text noted that among its many merits, the mailbox "cannot be shot full of holes by an ambitious marksman."

For quite a few years I've admired the resourcefulness of home mechanics who have welded together steel cages, mortared layers of brick, or installed ramparts of disused plumbing pipes to defend against marauding teens. (My favorite piece of handiwork, spotted in Arkansas several years ago, involved two fifty-five-gallon drums, several heavy steel beams, and at least 300 pounds of concrete.) But lately I've noticed a change along the roadside: commercially manufactured anti-vandal mailboxes are cropping up.

This trend may mark the beginning of the end of an underappreciated (and perhaps even unnoticed) golden age of homemade mailbox fortifications. Although that would be a disappointment to those of us who occasionally stop to take snapshots of particularly impressive weekend projects, it must be admitted that many of the commercial offerings are also worthy of admiration. Especially appealing are the spare, sturdy roadside bunkers produced by Veeders Mailbox, a firm that, not coincidentally, has its headquarters just northeast of Cincinnati.

"As far as heavy-duty goes, I'm pretty sure I was the first," says Jonathan Magro, who founded Veeders in 1978. Magro got into the business after

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JACK MOLLOY

he volunteered to make a replacement mailbox for a neighbor. He bent a sheet of thick steel into an upside-down U shape, welded a bottom and a back onto it, and attached a heavy door. Another neighbor wanted one, and then another. A local newspaper published an article about his mailboxes, and Magro, who describes himself as a “barnyard mechanic,” has been manufacturing vandal-resistant mailboxes ever since. (He refuses to use the term “vandal-proof,” owing to his respect for the ingenuity of reprobates, especially those who have enlisted two-ton bottle jacks in their campaigns.)

Magro and his wife, Jenny, run the business from a small and charmless industrial building in Loveland, where they employ three people to help with the welding and shipping. In the past their products were carried in catalogues like Frontgate and Sporty’s Preferred Living and sold through various Web sites, including Richard Lee’s. These outlets eventually switched to competing products, and Magro says that this is fine with him. His own Web site (www.veedersmailbox.com) now accounts for about 90 percent of sales, and he retains a higher cut of the retail price, which ranges from \$190 to \$361 plus shipping.

Nationwide there are now a dozen or so manufacturers of mailbox-defense systems and vandal-resistant mailboxes. The Pivoting Post Company makes an arm that swings the mailbox away on impact; this is supposed to preserve the mailbox intact. Jandmar makes the MaiLocker, which has a peaked roof and a Darth Vaderesque aspect, and according to company literature, it is the product of “several years of research and testing.” EPM sells the Vandalgard, a hardened encasement with a prominent dorsal fin which wraps around a pre-existing mailbox; the company claims that the device will put “an end to damage from baseball bats, rocks, water balloons, snow plow discharge, beer bottles, and shotguns.”

Much of the appeal of a Veeders box is that it retains the pleasingly iconic form and proportions of a traditional sheet-metal mailbox: it has the

gracefully rounded top, the flat bottom, and the little red flag that flips up. You could drive by one and not take particular notice. The chief difference between a box for which you’d pay a few dollars at a hardware store and a Veeders is the materials: a Veeders is constructed of ten-gauge carbon or stainless steel, which is thicker than the steel used for highway guardrails. A Veeders customer from Indiana once reported that pipe bombs had been placed in mailboxes along his street, including his own. “Although the blast we heard was quite loud and the three-quarter-inch pipe was completely fragmented, the effect on the mailbox was not major,” he wrote.

Judging by the letters and e-mails Magro receives from satisfied customers, one of the motives behind splurging on an expensive and durable mailbox is the hope that troublemakers will learn of it the hard way—by swinging at it while leaning from a car traveling at a high rate of speed. “We’ve had it now for some 12 or so years,” one pleased customer from Massachusetts wrote last December, “and have often been awakened in the middle of the night with the sound of a ball bat, pipe or some other implement hitting the box, followed shortly thereafter by a scream.”

When he used to hawk his mailboxes at home shows, Magro was often approached by vandalism sufferers who would launch into vivid descriptions of their dream mailboxes. He says, “People would take out pencil and paper and draw World War Two tank traps”—devices that would impale the chassis of a car on a hidden steel beam were someone to try to ram the mailbox. “Others wanted to know if I’d make them a mailbox with concertina wire around it.” Magro declined such requests, pointing out that liability issues would likely arise were someone to build a mailbox system the intent of which was to maim or kill.

At Magro’s suggestion I took a drive through Indian Hill, an affluent northeastern suburb. On winding lanes and along major thoroughfares alike I spotted dozens of Veeders mailboxes, tidy and uncreased, lined up like

soldiers against an unseen enemy. This fortifying of the suburbs may strike some as an occasion for hand-wringing—further evidence that an erosion in quality of life is creeping from hard-bitten cities to once idyllic provinces. But I don’t see it that way. In an era when computer hackers are stealing credit-card numbers and nasty animal-borne viruses are transgressing national borders, it’s reassuring to know that sometimes all it takes to get a good night’s rest is just a stouter piece of steel. —WAYNE CURTIS

ASTRAKHAN, RUSSIA

THE CAVIAR THUGS

*Poverty, corruption, and crime
are threatening to destroy
a Russian institution*

.....

The words *chornaya ikra*—“black caviar”—have recently acquired an illicit ring in the Volga River-delta town of Astrakhan, the caviar capital of Russia if not of the planet. (Three quarters of the world’s caviar comes from sturgeon caught in the Volga and the Caspian Sea, into which the river drains.) When I asked for caviar during a visit to Astrakhan last fall, shopkeepers answered with incredulous stares or handed me second-rate, red salmon roe from the Russian Far East. Merchants in open-air markets responded to my request with a muttered “*Nyetu*” (“There is none”) and then looked both ways and advised me to ask the shaven-skulled thugs in track suits loitering nearby. The thugs, members of local gangs, whispered that they were selling caviar “stolen straight from the Astrakhan fish-processing plant,” but their wares turned out to be hastily processed poached caviar packed in cans pilfered from the plant. First-class *chornaya ikra*, I soon realized, was nowhere to be found.

The reason, I learned, has to do with poaching, an activity that, by devastating sturgeon populations, shrank Russia’s legal sturgeon harvest from 10,000 tons in 1992 to 500 tons last year. (The famed giant beluga, the largest and most highly prized species

of sturgeon, has all but disappeared.) As supply has decreased, caviar prices in the West have risen, prompting suppliers both legal and illegal to export most of their caviar for hard currency rather than sell it locally for rubles.

The Russian government permits sturgeon fishing only during the spring and fall. Poachers, who fish year round, collectively take in some 8,000 tons of sturgeon a year—ten times the legally allowed catch. Some poachers—generally small-timers—operate in the delta's reed- and willow-lined maze of creeks, departing from the village docks after dark in rowboats. Their haul is diminishing steadily; many of them catch only a few fish a year, but even this is enough to justify the effort. "I make nine dollars a month driving a tractor here, and they don't even pay me that on time," one poacher, who works on a collective farm during the day, told me. "I've got a family to feed, so I turn to the river. I manage to catch about five fish a year. At a hundred and eighty-five dollars' worth of caviar a fish, that means nine hundred dollars. If I didn't poach, we couldn't eat."

Once the poachers have hauled a sturgeon aboard, they kill the fish and immediately extract its roe, which they place in jars. After cleaning the fish and wrapping it in paper, they do their best to hide it—possession of a sturgeon carcass out of season is *prima facie* evidence of poaching. Around dawn they pull into hidden coves where local resellers gather to buy their wares. The caviar brings eighty dollars a pound, the sturgeon flesh two dollars a pound.

Although the patrol boats of the Rybokhrana (Fish-Resources Guard) may intercept poachers en route, and the beat-up Ladas of the militia may be waiting for them on shore, capture is little more than a nuisance these days. Because the Soviet government relied on caviar as a vital source of hard currency, it dealt poachers stiff jail sentences—typically twelve years. But in 1991 the Russian government, in the spirit of leniency prevailing in the early post-Soviet years, reduced sentences to two years and introduced fines—about seventy-five dollars for each poached fish. If the Rybokhrana or the militia

shows up, poachers either dump their catch overboard or try to bribe the officers. This is generally an easy task: militia salaries are only sixty to a hundred dollars a month.

When the authorities encounter a poacher, they must by law take his fish and roe (and even officers who accept bribes do so). This provision practically guarantees that poaching enriches the law-enforcement agencies ostensibly working to eradicate poaching. Former poachers I spoke with described what typically happens when a militiaman



intercepts a poacher: The officer releases the poacher in exchange for a bribe and then, following the law, takes the caviar to a store designated by the government as a buyer of *konfiskat*, or confiscated roe. The store buys the *konfiskat* for the equivalent of about eighteen dollars a pound—a price set by local authorities. It will later transfer the money to state coffers. The militiaman demands an additional ten dollars a pound, which he pockets. The store then calls a trader and sells him the caviar for sixty dollars a pound. When the deal is done, eighteen dollars a pound have gone to the state, ten to the militiaman, and thirty-two to the store. The market value of roe is \$122 a pound in Astrakhan, so the trader makes a profit of more than 100 percent—some of which he returns to the

store clerk in order to ensure continued business.

But of course the real danger to the sturgeon population doesn't come from small-time poachers or their associates. Official connections and a means of transport are needed to get large amounts of illegal caviar across the delta and out of the country to markets in the West. This is where the *mafioznyye brakashi*, or "mafia poachers," come into play. They are usually employees, rather than members, of criminal gangs. They devote themselves exclusively to the trade, earning \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month. Because they have official connections, discretion about their wealth is unnecessary: their two- and three-story brick houses, sporting freshly painted window frames and surrounded by neat lawns, stand proudly amid the rusting tractors and weathered shacks of decrepit collective farms; their new fiberglass skiffs, outfitted with powerful Yamaha motors, rock serenely in the lazy currents of the delta. The *mafioznyye brakashi* generally fish in the Caspian Sea, where small-timers in unsteady craft cannot safely venture. They treat sturgeon solely as a source of caviar, slicing open their living prey, scooping the roe into cans, and dumping the carcasses overboard.

Corrupt militiamen meet the poachers upon their return to shore and accompany them to Astrakhan. Every few miles along the delta's cracked highways and dirt roads one comes across checkpoints, at which officers stop vehicles and search for caviar. Over and over again, driving those roads, I saw cars carrying a militiaman and a couple of bare-skulled toughs shoot straight through the checkpoints with a wave and a friendly toot of the horn.

Back in Astrakhan the poachers deliver the caviar to safe houses for processing—a simple matter of cleansing the roe in ice water and then in a saline solution. They can the caviar, pack the cans in ice and towels, load them into suitcases, and fill the trunks of their cars. They then either make the twenty-hour drive to Moscow, where they sell the roe in open-air markets for as much as \$400 a pound, or ride

two days to Brest, a city in Belarus near the Polish border, where they sell it to their counterparts in the local mafia. The Brest mafia sends the suitcases over the border with forged documents certifying the caviar's legal provenance. In Eastern Europe caviar fetches as much as \$700 a pound; in Western Europe and the United States it goes for as much as \$2,000 a pound. Legal or not, the taste is the same.

Smuggling caviar could become even more lucrative, at least in the short term. In the next year or so diminishing fish stocks could prompt the Russian government to impose a moratorium on commercial sturgeon fishing, an act that would cause caviar prices to soar and would make the mafia's business more profitable than ever—until stocks became too depleted to make poaching worthwhile. However, poaching could also become much riskier. Those in the trade fear that President Vladimir Putin, a former KGB official who came to power promising a “dictatorship of the law,” may decide to clamp down on them. If he does, their partnerships with corrupt members of local law-enforcement agencies will make them highly vulnerable: the agencies could arrest the poachers and smugglers immediately, knowing all too well who they are.

Caviar has held a place at the top of Russian menus under czarist, communist, and post-Soviet regimes alike; until the economic crisis of 1998 even people with modest incomes could afford half a pound or so a month. In a land of ice and chains and endemic suffering, caviar provided gustatory salvation from grief and black days, a sensual escape from temporal woes. It was prized for medicinal reasons as well: it contains lipids, vitamins, and albumen that, Russians believe, can cure anemia, fight cancer and other illnesses, lower blood pressure, increase virility, and lessen fatigue in pregnant women. For centuries caviar has embodied the superlative and extravagant qualities that Russians enjoy attributing to their homeland. But soon, like the country's *matryoshki* (nesting) dolls and onion-domed churches, it may become a symbol of a vanished past. —JEFFREY TAYLER

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FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA

FORGET THE ARTIFICIAL SNIFFER

The United States has pursued expensive high-tech solutions to the problem of land-mine clearance—but simpler methods may be in order

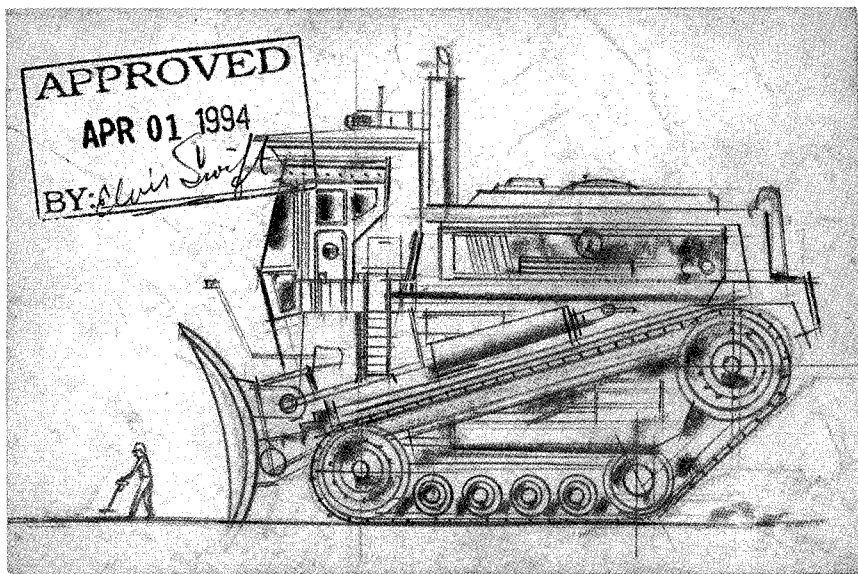
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In a cavernous machine shop at Fort Belvoir, in northern Virginia, stands an eleven-foot-high bulldozer. Originally manufactured by the Swiss construction-equipment company Liebherr, it has been customized with thick steel plating on the undercarriage, a protective cockpit, and a special rotating tiller that is guided by ultrasonic depth-control sensors. The tiller is designed to “scarify the ground and bring large objects to the surface,” Mike Collins, the Army engineer who adapted the machine, told me. The revamped bulldozer is for clearing land mines. Its final cost is likely to be half a million dollars.

Fort Belvoir is home to the Army’s Night Vision and Electronic Sensors Directorate, which in turn houses the Humanitarian Demining R&D Program. Although the United States has so far refused to sign the 1997 Ottawa Convention banning the use of anti-personnel mines (it has cited, among other rationales, the need to continue mining the border between North and South Korea), in October of 1997 the Clinton Administration pledged to eliminate the global threat to civilians from land mines by 2010. Since then the United States has spent \$255 million on “humanitarian mine action,” which includes civilian mine-awareness programs, training for foreign deminers, and development of new demining technology. Some \$54 million of that money has gone to the Pentagon’s R&D efforts, chief among them the program at Fort Belvoir.

Research efforts are under way outside the Pentagon as well, in both the private and the public sector. Government-supported efforts include the Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative and the Army Research Lab program, which award basic-research grants to universities around the country, and the Defense Advanced Re-

search Projects Agency (DARPA, the organization that developed the early version of the Internet), which is pursuing highly experimental solutions that could take years to produce results. Among the programs DARPA has funded are a \$25 million quest to develop an artificial dog’s nose (at present dogs are the only mine detectors that can sense explosives rather than metal) and a \$2.5 million effort to investigate whether honeybees could be trained to pinpoint land mines and other military targets.



The engineers at Fort Belvoir, in contrast, focus on developing tools that can be used by de-miners currently in the field. Those tools include the Air-Spade, which rapidly clears the earth covering suspected mines; the Rhino, a remote-controlled tiller for mechanically unearthing mines; and the mini-flail, a remote-controlled vehicle that thrashes the ground with spinning chains to detonate mines.

Ingenious as these devices are, many of them will never find their way to a minefield. And some of those that do—for example, a twelve-foot-

long weed trimmer for clearing brush—have proved to be unreliable, useless, or even dangerous in real-world conditions.

Land mines are easily detected, but exceedingly difficult to distinguish from the tin cans, spent cartridges, and other metallic debris that litter the world’s war zones. Fewer than one percent of all signals from deminers’ metal detectors indicate land mines. Moreover, the technology used in the field has barely advanced since World War II. By far the most prevalent system remains the so-called creep-and-probe method: a de-miner uses a metal detector to locate an “anomaly” underground and then probes the ground with a stick to determine whether the anomaly is a mine. Once discovered, mines are carefully dug

up and detonated in place or removed. The process is laborious and inefficient as well as dangerous.

There’s also the problem of where to look. Combatants in countries such as Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, and Mozambique have hardly restricted themselves to well-defined battlefields; indeed, civilians have frequently been their targets. Because mines could be anywhere, searchers must look everywhere. “The disposing of individual mines can be achieved rapidly, but to search every square centimetre of land takes time,” Mike Croll, a former engi-

neer in the British army who has led mine-clearance programs around the world, wrote in *The History of Landmines* (1998). According to de-miners, up to 90 percent of their time is spent combing areas that ultimately prove to be free of mines.

The task is further complicated by the fact that mine detection is what scientists call a "multivariate problem," resistant to uniform solutions. More than 800 kinds of land mines, many of crude local design, are in use today. They are laid in widely varying and usually harsh terrain. Mine detectors that work well in the Cambodian jungle may be useless on Afghanistan's arid plateaus; a sensor designed to work in clay is of little help in the sands of the Sahara. But researchers have been slow to adapt their efforts accordingly: only a few years ago they commonly remarked that a Nobel Prize awaited the inventor of a safe, universally effective mine detector. Recently that view has given way to a sober realism. While some scientists carry on the search for an electronic sniffer, the Army has begun to shift from seeking ultra-high-tech equipment applicable everywhere to a "toolbox" approach aimed at supplying a range of simpler devices suitable for different conditions.

There is, however, no "procurement path" for the equipment developed at Fort Belvoir. Because the United States is not officially in the business of mine clearance, the Army's new de-mining technology has no built-in market. And the Air-Spades and Rhinos find few customers among the governments of poor, war-ravaged countries, or the nongovernmental organizations that work in those countries. Angola and Cambodia, for example, would have a hard time buying half-million-dollar bulldozers—and at any rate, after more than two years of development the revamped Liebherr machine is still undergoing field trials and modifications.

In the end, an effective de-miners' toolbox may not need much expensive gadgetry. In the province of Bengo, in Angola (one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, in which a million people have been displaced by

war), the German nongovernmental organization Menschen gegen Minen (People Against Mines) has since 1996 achieved impressive results with a system that integrates new but relatively modest technology with classic creep-and-probe methods. First an armored truck with a cutting attachment—much simpler than the bulldozer I saw at Fort Belvoir—clears the vegetation from a suspected minefield. Next de-miners, working with metal detectors and dogs, locate and mark suspected mines. Then the mines are defused or detonated on site or removed and blown up in bulk. Finally, an armored Caterpillar grader levels the ground, piling up berms that denote the boundaries of the mine-free zone. MgM's system can be readily transported (all the equipment fits into a C-130 cargo plane) and was designed for easy maintenance and repair. By the end of last year some 56,000 displaced people had returned safely to their homes in Bengo Province. The cost of the mine clearance: less than \$6 million. De-miner casualties: zero. —RICHARD MARTIN

LE KEF, TUNISIA

ROMAN AFRICA

The economic and political fault lines that separated Carthage and Numidia are the ones that separate Tunisia and Algeria—and the Romans drew them

.....

From the parapets of Le Kef, on a rocky spur in northwestern Tunisia, one can see deep into the mountains of Algeria, whose border is a short distance away. A fort of some kind has existed here since Carthaginian times, 2,500 years ago, and the other ruins of ancient cities are all around. Dominating the view to the southwest is Jugurtha's Table, a massive mesa atop which the Numidian King Jugurtha held out against a Roman army from 112 to 105 B.C. But it is the modern town of Le Kef—and also the political tension along the Algerian border—that demonstrate the relevance of antiquity to contem-

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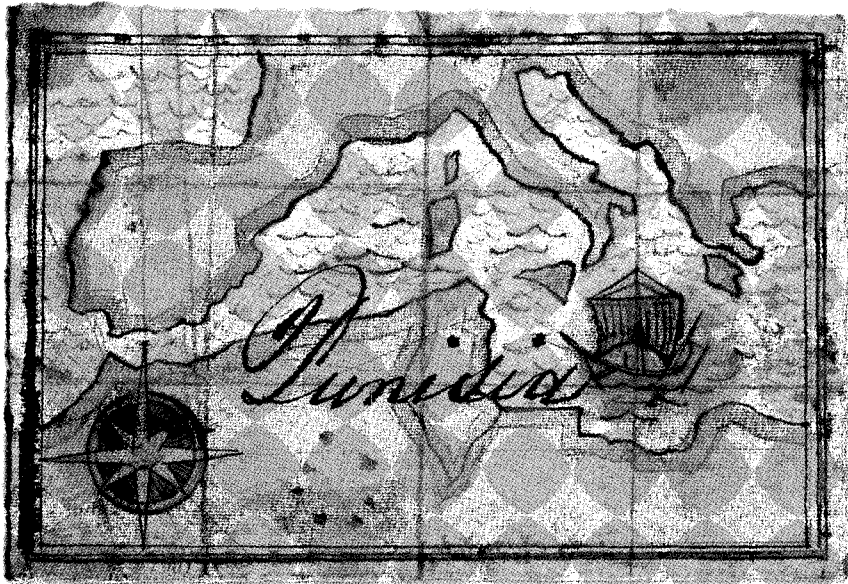
porary politics in Arab North Africa.

Le Kef, a town of 50,000, is no fundamentalist enclave or Third World disaster zone. Its women are assertive and dress in fashionable Western clothes. It has a large Internet café, cash machines, new apartment blocks, elegant street lighting, dependable plumbing and electricity, and reforested hillsides. The taxi drivers use meters and wear seat belts. Nearly everyone I met had been to France or Italy, and the road to Tunis, the capital, two and a quarter hours to the east, is busy with traffic. But no one I met in Le Kef had ever been to Souk Ahras, a town of Le Kef's size in Algeria, although it is only an hour's drive away. "There is nothing in Algeria—anyway, it is too dangerous," a local businessman told me last January, referring to the

Since the days of ancient Carthage the area that makes up present-day Tunisia has been like this: an oasis of urbanity, relative prosperity, and stable government jutting out into the Mediterranean, close to Sicily, and yet squeezed between vast tracts of unruly tribal territory. Though lacking the oil and natural gas of their Libyan and Algerian neighbors, Tunisia's 9.6 million people are by some estimates 60 percent middle class, with a poverty rate of only six percent. Yearly economic growth rarely falls below five percent, and inflation hovers around three percent. The World Economic Forum rates Tunisia the most competitive country in Africa, whereas Algeria does not even appear on its list of twenty-four African economies. Although many developing countries

Roman term, meant Tunisia long before it meant anything else. Archaeologists have uncovered 200 Roman cities in the fertile farmlands of northern Tunisia, where the vast majority of the population lives. North Africa was the granary of the Roman Empire and produced more olive oil than Italy. The Romans built thousands of miles of roads there, and also bridges, dams, aqueducts, and irrigation systems; one aqueduct alone, still partially visible near the town of Zaghouan, carried 8.5 million gallons of water daily to Carthage, fifty-five miles to the north. Fifteen percent of Rome's senators came from Tunisia. Not only the Romans but also the fifth-century Vandals and every conqueror since, including the French in the nineteenth century, made the fertile north of Tunisia their base in North Africa.

In contrast, Algeria and Libya have virtually no history as organized states before the arrival of colonial map-makers; they connote not nations so much as vague geographical expressions. The ancient cities of Thagaste (the modern Souk Ahras) and Hippo Regius (the modern Annaba), in eastern Algeria, were always oriented toward Carthage, where Saint Augustine, born in Thagaste in 354, went to study; through much of history the cities of western Algeria were linked politically to the Berber kingdoms of Morocco. Libya is almost all desert, with the exception of the cities of Tripoli and Benghazi, which traditionally have had little in common: Tripoli, the capital, usually had close economic ties with present-day Tunisia, and Benghazi was aligned with Egypt. The diatribes of the Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi about Arab unity are attempts to mask Libya's own disunity. The fourteenth-century historian Ibn Khaldun wrote in his *Muqaddimah* (*Introduction to History*) that the areas that are now Algeria and Libya were rarely stable. Consider the situation today: After a bloody war of independence from France, Algeria became a Soviet-style state in the 1960s. A brief experiment with democracy in the early 1990s collapsed into civil war and anarchy, from which the



Algerian civil war, in which Islamic extremists hijacked buses and murdered the passengers. Tunisia's Culture Minister, Abdelbaki Hermassi, says, "Our reference groups are the French and the Italians, not the Algerians and Libyans."

Despite its long borders with Algeria and Libya, Tunisia "is an island," explains Oussama Romdhani, the director of the government's information agency. Much of the frontier is desert, and the land crossings are used mainly by Algerians and Libyans, who come to buy consumer products, including alcohol.

waste money on grandiose projects, Tunisia devotes a quarter of its budget to education.

"People say our success is because of this policy or that policy, or because we have been fortunate to have good leaders," Romdhani says. "Though that is all true, there must be something deeper going on." The explanation for Tunisia's success begins with the fact that modern Tunisia corresponds roughly to the borders of ancient Carthage and of the Roman province that replaced it in 146 B.C., after a third and final war between the two powers. "Africa," originally a

country has only partially recovered. Qaddafi's thirty years of misrule have created no institutions in Libya except those of terror. Meanwhile, from 1956 through 1987 President Habib Bourguiba's success at building a relatively secular Westernized state in Tunisia earned him the appellation "the Arab Atatürk"—a reference to modern Turkey's founder. Bourguiba's successor, Zine el-Abdine Ben Ali, by dramatically expanding the middle class through enlightened dictatorship, has earned comparisons to Lee Kuan Yew, of Singapore.

Tunisia's borders extend far beyond its fertile north, and it is in those far reaches where problems of development arise. In the archaeology museum at Chemtou, near Le Kef, where the Romans quarried for marble, there is a map showing the *fossa regia*—"demarcation ditch"—that the Roman general Scipio dug after defeating Hannibal in 202 B.C. The ditch, the remains of which are still visible, runs from Tabarka, on Tunisia's northwest coast, southward and then sharply eastward to Sfax, another Tunisian port. Even today that line has meaning. The Tunisian towns and villages beyond the *fossa regia* have far fewer ancient remains and—more significant—are poorer. There men and women wear traditional head wraps; unemployment seems higher, judging by the number of men hanging out in cafés; bus stations often have no posted timetables. The feeling is more like North Africa and less like Southern Europe.

In antiquity Numidia lay beyond the demarcation ditch, an undeveloped region that included eastern Algeria, southern Tunisia, and western Libya. Beyond Numidia there was little except scattered settlements. Indeed, although Roman settlements dotted Africa's Mediterranean coast from Morocco to Egypt, the only concentration of them was within the *fossa regia*: the heart of modern Tunisia and its economy.

"Because urbanization in northern Tunisia has always been more extensive, going back to ancient Carthage," Abdelbaki Hermassi explains, "sedentary life is older here, and tribal identi-

ty based on nomadism correspondingly weak. Thus the centralized state is more deeply embedded." Regimes in Algeria and Libya never succeeded in weakening tribal identities, so governments there have been feeble unless they resorted to cruelty. President Ben Ali—who, incidentally, occupies a palace overlooking the ruins of Carthage—must make a special effort to integrate Tunisia's south through road building, telephone lines, and the like. "In Roman times you could ignore the periphery," Hermassi says. "Today we need to draw in the shadow zone beyond Roman settlement that is within our borders."

Just as the settled farmers of Carthage and Roman "Africa" were constantly threatened by the seminomadic pastoralists of Numidia, Tunisians today feel threatened by the instability all around them. Thus they put great store by the fact that in 1995 Tunisia became the first Arab country to sign an association agreement with the European Union. For Tunisians the future leads, as it has since antiquity, to Rome. —ROBERT D. KAPLAN

TORRINGTON, CONNECTICUT RUSH TO JUDGMENT

There may be more—and less—behind the high-profile news account of a boy's setting himself on fire

.....

When I first heard the story, it went like this: One winter night a thirteen-year-old boy was watching TV with his friends. No adults were in the house. On came a show in which a handsome hipster doused himself with gasoline, set himself afire, and danced around. The hipster was dressed in a protective fireproof suit, but the innocent boy didn't know that. To him it looked as though soaking oneself in gasoline and setting oneself afire were safe and fun. The boy took some gasoline and a lighter into his snowy back yard and tried the stunt himself. He was gruesomely burned from head to toe—a victim of parental neglect, or irresponsible media manipulation, or maybe both.

This was the story of Jason Lind, a teenager in Torrington, Connecticut, who suffered terrible burns on a Friday night in January. The story was misleading and incomplete, but it spread nationwide, because it had all the ingredients of a flashy news item: the image of a burned child, a popular television show, and political and moral controversy.

Now let me tell you a nonstory. These are the facts in the Lind case, as far as I have been able to ascertain them.

At 10:08 P.M. on Friday, January 26, fire fighters were called to a house in Torrington. There they found a small group of teenagers wandering around, some in shock, some giddy, some concerned. In the kitchen they found members of the household tending Jason Lind, whose legs and hands bore second- and third-degree burns.

Jason, an award-winning Little Leaguer partial to skateboards and BMX bikes, had tried a daredevil stunt with fire. When one of the fire fighters asked what had happened, a kid on the scene replied, "They were playing *Jackass*." When asked what that meant, the kid explained, "MTV, man."

The local police gathered that Jason had begun playing with fire several weeks earlier, possibly inspired by something he had seen on *Jackass*. One sergeant told *The Hartford Courant* that Jason had held his boot over gasoline burning in the snow; he had also put gasoline on his boot, ignited it, and then plunged his boot into the snow. Not everyone agreed with these reports. The Lind family's lawyer said that Jason had been involved in only one previous episode with fire.

On that January night Jason and several other kids visited his friends the Fords. Around eight-thirty Mrs. Ford, seeing the youngsters cozily curled in front of the TV with their shoes off, and knowing that there were two eighteen-year-olds among the group, felt comfortable leaving them to go to a friend's house for a cup of coffee.

By ten o'clock Jason had changed into some old pants and a couple of shirts and a sweater. He had put on a motorcycle helmet and an old pair of boots and had gone into the back

yard with two friends and a plastic cup of gasoline.

Minutes later Jason was on fire. His pants had been saturated with gasoline and ignited. Some of Jason's friends extinguished the fire and took Jason inside, where they put wet towels on his wounds. Emergency personnel arrived and rushed Jason to a hospital, where, according to *The Hartford Courant*, he apologized from the emergency-room table.

Sometimes if you know more, things get less clear.

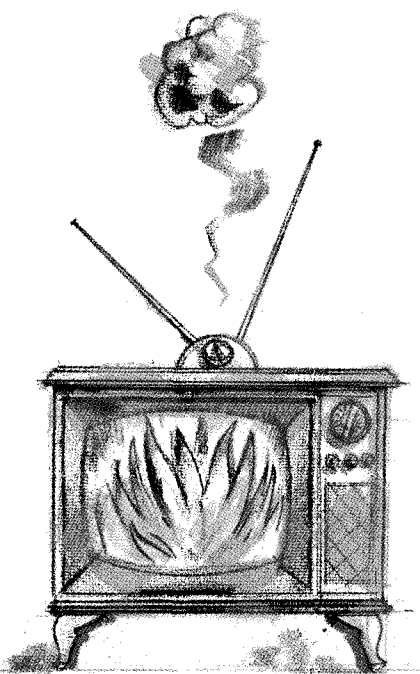
Jackass is MTV's second highest rated show, boasting a cumulative viewership of 39 million. Its host, Johnny Knoxville, is a charmingly dissolute thirty-year-old who leads a pack of skateboarding goofball dudes on expeditions of tasteless pranking and inept stunting. A diver plunges proudly from a ladder into a kiddie pool full of elephant poop. Johnny earns an ovation from his buddies by letting himself be sprayed by a scared skunk. The lads applaud and guffaw over the ankles they sprain and the noses they smash by slamming into immovable objects. Shot in a clunky home-video style and featuring plentiful digitally masked nudity, the show revels in all the naughty and risky things your parents warned you against (but that *you* knew perfectly well you would survive).

In Episode 103, first broadcast last October, Johnny Knoxville decides he wants to be set on fire. We see a stuntman, Kevin McCarthy (identified as a "pyrotechnics professional"), put Johnny into a multi-layer "burn suit," the kind used in movies. Kevin explains various safety precautions and shows Johnny how to signal for help if he should feel at all uncomfortable. When Johnny jokes about the situation, Kevin counters by telling him about the horrible burns that stuntpersons have suffered after making even slight mistakes. He then covers Johnny's face with a fireproof mask, applies fuel with a paintbrush, and ignites Johnny with a flamethrower. Johnny dances around for about ten seconds and then gives the discomfort signal. Two assistants standing by with fire extinguishers

instantly step in and put out the fire. Kevin pulls the mask off Johnny's sweaty face. Relieved, Johnny explains that he gave the signal because he couldn't breathe anymore—the fire was taking all his oxygen.

Every *Jackass* episode begins with—and every commercial break is followed by—a full-screen disclaimer reminding viewers that the stunts are dangerous and should not be tried at home. The stunts, according to the disclaimer used at the time, are performed by "professionals and/or total idiots."

Within four days of Jason Lind's burning Senator Joseph Lieberman, of Connecticut, had talked with Jason's



father, and had accused MTV of broadcasting *Jackass* irresponsibly. On February 7 Lieberman wrote a letter to MTV's parent company, Viacom, reprimanding the network for presenting its material "without informing viewers that the performer of the stunt was wearing protective clothing" and asking MTV to change, reschedule, or "cancel this exploitative and degrading show."

Two things undermine Senator Lieberman's statement. First, the factual error: more than half of the three-minute *Jackass* segment—about a minute and forty-five seconds—is devoted to showing Knoxville being suited in protective gear and to ex-

plaining the safety procedures in detail. Second, two days after Lieberman sent his letter, the Lind family's attorney announced that Jason's parents were busy caring for their child and felt that it was inappropriate and premature to discuss lawsuits or point fingers until fact had been sorted from hearsay. "At this time," the attorney said, "I don't think anyone has a clear picture of what happened two weeks ago. Neither I nor the police have been able to ask Jason what happened." The doctors had recommended letting Jason recover before raising stressful questions.

Nevertheless, in the wake of the widely publicized story, the notion of blaming TV for the misadventures of youth seemed to be in vogue. On February 3 a twelve-year-old in Florida doused his hand in bug spray, lit it on fire, and ended up with burns. "I don't blame myself," he said. "I kind of blame the show"—by which he meant *Jackass*.

Then, on February 15, Senator Fritz Hollings, of South Carolina, cited Jason Lind's story when he proposed a bill (S. 341) that would limit children's exposure to "violent" television. His law would restrict children's access to shows with "violent" special effects and stunts. But it would permit exceptions for news and sports, where the bloodshed is real. I'm mystified. How can a senator use Jason Lind's suffering to validate such a sweeping, inconsistent law when so many fundamental questions remain unanswered—and are possibly unanswerable?

By the beginning of April, MTV had moved *Jackass* to a later time slot and had removed every trace of wit from its disclaimer. Jason Lind had returned to school. He wore baggy cargo jeans over his bandaged legs. His attorney said he was embarrassed about the incident and didn't want anybody to notice him. According to the attorney, Jason was still "not able to shed clear light on the different stories, because he has no clear recollection of everything that happened." As of this writing, Jason's parents have announced no plans to pursue legal or political action. They are helping Jason to catch up on his schoolwork and get back to normal.

A tutor works with him three nights a week. His mother, Kathy Lind, told a reporter, "He seems to care more. He missed a lot, but he is focused. He is glad he is able to walk."

When I have questions about child-rearing, I turn to an authority I trust: my parents. On a recent visit home I sat at the kitchen table with my mother, who is ninety-two, and put before her all the clippings I had collected about Jason Lind. She read them and then looked up at me through her large, rectangular bifocals and said, "Strange. That boy, all burned up, apologizes in the emergency room. He knew what he had done was noodleheaded. I wonder if they'd discussed it—if his parents had told him not to play with fire and then he went to somebody else's house and did it anyway. Of course, I'm just guessing. Nobody knows, and it's none of our business."

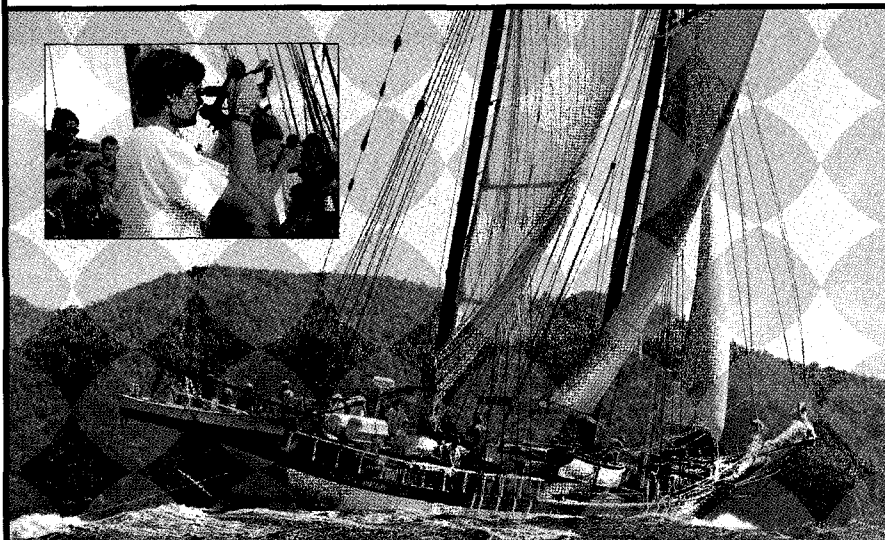
I asked my father, who is eighty-seven, what he would do if Jason were his son. He rubbed the top of his bald head thoughtfully. "I'd just take care of the kid," he said. "He's learned the hard way. He's not going to do it again. Get burned for a while, you know all about it."

When I consider the 4.9 million people who, according to MTV, viewed Episode 103 of *Jackass* without harm, and when I see how lovingly Jason Lind's parents are nursing their son, I think my parents have the right idea. Blaming parents and attacking the media will not stop children from making mistakes. As the psychologist groping to understand a troubled youngster in Peter Shaffer's play *Equus* says,

A child is born into a world of phenomena, all equal in their power to enslave. It sniffs—it sucks—it strokes its eyes over the whole uncomfortable range. Suddenly one strikes. Why? Moments snap together like magnets, forging a chain of shackles. Why? I can trace them. I can even, with time, pull them apart again. But why at the start were they ever magnetized at all—just those particular moments of experience and no others—I don't know. *And nor does anyone else.*

—TELLER

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BY JAMES FALLOWS

Illustrations by Chris Gall

.....

OVERLOAD

People who travel on airlines all have stories about how bad the experience is when things go wrong. Lost or damaged luggage. Unexplained waits on the taxiway, with the passengers strapped in but the plane not allowed to take off. Missed connections and overnight delays because of snow in Denver or fog in San Francisco or thunderstorms in the Midwest.

But the more striking fact is how unpleasant and inefficient the experience can be when nothing in particular has gone wrong. The series of waits: to get over the bridge or through the tunnel or the tollbooth en route to the airport; to drop off the rental car or catch the shuttle bus from the parking lot; to make it to the check-in counter; to pass through the security gate; to get the shuttle to the far-off terminal; to buy coffee or sandwiches to supplement the pretzels offered as food on the trip; to get onto the plane and join the fight for space in the overhead bins. Because any of these waits can turn out to be much longer than "normal," worst-case padding for all of them must be built into plans for leaving home or work to get to the airport. When flight delays were reaching record levels last summer, an executive from an airplane-manufacturing company told me that he'd made a bet with a friend. The bet concerned how long it would be before an argument over a canceled flight or a lost bag led one frustrated person to kill another in an airport. It would have happened already, the man said, except that airport security gates keep passengers from bringing in guns.

Then, on the other end, more waits: for the bags, for the car or taxi from the airport to the home, office, meeting, or vacation site one is trying to reach. That final leg of the trip can be a minor factor for those traveling nonstop from one airline hub city to another—New York to Chicago, say, or Atlanta to Dallas. But it represents a large share of the total travel time for people either beginning or ending their journey somewhere other than in one of these hubs. For trips of 500 miles or less, which include the majority of air journeys, going by commercial airline is effectively no faster

than traveling by car. "Think about it," the administrator of NASA, Daniel Goldin, said in a speech in 1998. "You are flying through the air at three hundred to five hundred miles per hour during the part of your trip that is in the commercial airplane. But your *average* speed from when you left your home to when you arrive at your destination is only fifty or sixty miles per hour."

The steep pricing penalty for last-minute bookings and changes helps the airlines use their fleets efficiently, as does hub-and-spoke routing. But both policies mean less freedom and flexibility for the traveler. Together they have also put air travel distinctly out of phase with the evolution of the modern economy as a whole.

Since at least the early nineties the trend in most businesses has been toward on-demand, always-available products and services that suit the customer's convenience rather than the company's. You can make or receive phone calls from almost anywhere. You can get money at any time from any ATM in almost any part of the world, and you can do your banking at 3:00 A.M. on your home computer rather than queuing up for a teller during bankers' hours. You can order books, clothes, movies, by phone, computer, or fax, and have them delivered overnight.

Through most of the twentieth century commercial air travel was an important part of the movement toward giving people more freedom, flexibility, and control over how they used their time. By the early 1940s airplanes had made it possible to cross the country in one long day of travel, rather than in several days by train. In the 1960s touring families and students could get to Europe on overnight charter flights, rather than having to spend five days on a ship. Businesses could receive timely shipments from distant suppliers and coordinate work among offices in different states or countries.

But starting in the 1990s commercial airlines added more rigidity than flexibility to the system, in order to keep airplanes full while competing on price. More and more of the traffic was routed through a small number of hub

airports, although the United States has well over 13,000 "landing facilities," many thousands of which would be suitable for all but the largest planes. Today more than 80 percent of all airline traffic takes off from or lands at one of the fifty busiest airports, and most of it at the twenty-four major hubs. As Dallas-Fort Worth, Dulles, Denver, and O'Hare become saturated with travelers and airplanes, one canceled flight means passengers sitting in the hallways and filling the standby lists for subsequent flights. Weather delays in one part of the country have ripple effects thousands of miles away.

Those who can pay enough for first-class seats and last-minute tickets can better fit travel to their own schedules. And those who can amortize the cost of a corporate jet see airplanes as the miracles of freedom they originally were. One springtime evening when I was living in Seattle, I took a ride in a ten-passenger jet owned by a software billionaire who was going to Monterey, California, for a dinner meeting—and coming back the same night. He and I and one other guest bound for the dinner left Seattle around five, spent two hours in the air each way, were flown by a team of two professional pilots, and were back a little past midnight. The fastest connection on a commercial airline, with a change in San Francisco, would have meant leaving Seattle at 1:00 P.M. and getting back at noon the next day. But that private jet had cost well over \$10 million, and the direct operating costs for the trip were well over \$12,000 not counting the pilots' pay.

There have been few dramatic changes in large-aircraft design since the 1960s, when the Concorde and the Boeing 747 made their debuts. But planes from Boeing and Airbus have become ever more efficient, more reliable, less polluting, quieter. Despite occasional horrific crashes, modern airliners are about the safest means of travel ever devised. Airline pilots may sound like corny travel guides when they come onto the intercom, and through the vast majority of a flight they do little more than monitor the engine gauges, autopilots, and "moving map" displays of where the plane is heading. But to have any knowledge at all of the world of flying is to respect the experience, judgment, and training that airline pilots must accumulate. No other group of professionals is retrained and retested so frequently. An oddly compelling book called *The Black Box* (1998), edited by Malcolm MacPherson, consists of little more than cockpit transcripts from flights that encountered serious trouble. In

most cases the planes crashed and everyone died; in a few the pilots brought them in with minimal damage. In virtually all the cases the competence of the crews as they tried to cope with disaster must be called heroic.

Why does a system that is so technically advanced and admirable lead to such unpleasant results? Because for more than a generation the money, effort, and innovation in civilian aviation have gone toward planes that can carry hundreds of passengers between Atlanta and Chicago, New York and Los Angeles, or any other "hub pair" at 400–500 miles an hour with ever higher reliability and ever lower cost per mile. While Boeing and Airbus have fought for this market, such companies as Gulfstream, Learjet, Challenger, Raytheon, and Cessna have poured effort and money into developing ever faster and sleeker jets that can take corporate officials or millionaires wherever they want to go whenever they want to go there. The result is like a land-travel system consisting of long-distance rail lines for most passengers and private limousines for a tiny elite.

It is a system that is nearing the limits of its capacity. Only so many airplanes can land at La Guardia or take off from LAX. At least two dozen of the major hub airports are classified as "seriously congested," working near their theoretical maximum capacity for takeoffs and landings in busy periods. Federal officials predicted last fall that overall airline traffic in the United States would more than double by 2010, with most



of the increase occurring in the already busiest airports.

What could relieve the overload and change the tedious realities of travel? I believe that the answer is being invented by entrepreneurs at a variety of start-up companies who are allied with sympathizers within the federal government in trying to create new air-travel alternatives to airlines. The government's role here, which is more than a decade old but has received virtually no publicity, is consistent with the century-long history of federal support for aviation. In the past this support came mainly through military contracts, but now the government is dealing with new, tiny companies and trying to help them survive without making them into mini-defense contractors permanently dependent on federal funds.

Eventually these projects should make it possible for many people to travel much of the time the way a few very rich people do now: in greater comfort, without fighting their way to and from crowded hubs, leaving from the small

airport closest to their home or office and flying direct to the small airport closest to their destination. This would be made possible by a product now missing from the vast array of flying devices: small planes that offer much of the speed and as much as possible of the safety of big airliners, at a small fraction of the cost of today's corporate jets.

The people racing to create new systems of air transportation are nearly all men who learned to fly as teenagers. I can't recall one I've interviewed who didn't have a poster of an airplane on his office wall or a little model plane on his desk. They think about airplanes all the time, and many say they started their companies because they wanted to have a different kind of plane to fly. Some of them argue, or at least dream, that if they make new planes that are nice enough (more comfortable, easier to fly, less expensive, above all much safer than today's small aircraft seem to be), then larger numbers of the public will eventually decide to become pilots themselves. Those pilots could then take advantage of the now underused network of small airports and relieve strain on the big hubs.

Whether or not the pilot population increases in the long run, for the foreseeable future small planes will make a difference mainly if they constitute the operating fleet for a new national system of air taxis. A supply of inexpensive, safe, comfortable small planes, flown by hired pilots and available at rates comparable to today's coach air fares, could bring freedom and convenience to a broader share of the traveling public than the class to whom "flying commercial" is a badge of shame.

Two of the companies deeply involved in the race to create this fleet are the Cirrus Design Corporation, of Duluth, Minnesota, and Eclipse Aviation, of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Cirrus is the first company to begin large-scale production of a genuinely new small airplane, which it calls the SR20. Eclipse is the company that is moving fastest toward the production of jet planes priced at well under a million dollars apiece, versus at least three to four times that much for all competitors. Its first plane is scheduled for delivery in 2003. Several other companies are working toward the same goal: Lancair, of Bend, Oregon, which makes a small, fast, propeller-driven plane like the SR20; Safire Aircraft, of West Palm Beach, Florida, which is planning a small jet to compete with the Eclipse; established airplane makers, including Cessna, of Wichita, Kansas, and newcomers such as Honda and Toyota, of Japan, which are all considering developing the new class of planes; and equipment manufacturers, such as Avidyne, of Lincoln, Massachusetts, and Garmin, of Olathe, Kansas, which are producing advanced electronic systems for use in the new planes. But for the moment Cirrus and Eclipse are setting the pace.

These companies face all the standard perils of start-ups in complicated manufacturing industries. For Cirrus the main challenge is a continuing struggle to raise working capital. For Eclipse it is to deliver the product it has promised to investors and customers. But if these companies falter, some of the others are likely to take their place. Building airplanes has for decades been a notorious way to lose money. The new contenders believe that this time market conditions and technological possibilities are on their side.

THE GENERAL-AVIATION MAFIA

In the fall of 1998 Bruce Holmes noticed that it was taking him longer and longer to get where he wanted to go. Holmes, an official at NASA, had been trained as an engineer, and his first instinct was to quantify and measure. So he decided to use himself as a kind of test probe to see exactly what had happened to the air-transportation system.

Holmes lived in Newport News, Virginia, near his work at NASA's Langley Research Center. When he took a business or personal trip that involved air travel, he would note the exact time he stepped out the door. He would glance at his watch at different stages of his journey: when he got to the airport, after he'd gone through the check-in line, after he'd found a

seat on the plane, and after the plane had finally begun to roll. He would record the time the plane landed and would make a final entry when he reached the hotel, office, or meeting site that was his destination.

"You know W. Edwards Deming?" Holmes asked when he described this ritual to me, at our first meeting last year. Deming was an American consultant whose prime analytic tool in the study of how to increase productivity was taking minute measurements at each stage of a factory's production process. "My friends like to say, 'Deming would be proud!'"

The log was just the beginning. When the trip was over, Holmes would calculate the "great circle" distance (what most people would call "as the crow flies") between his starting point and his destination and compare it with the total time spent en route; the result was his effective travel speed, on what he calls a "doorstep to destination" basis. Holmes, himself a pilot, would then use flight-planning software to see how long the same trip would have taken in a variety of modest propeller-driven planes—not corporate jets, not million-dollar turboprops, but a typical Cessna, Mooney, or Beech Bonanza. These planes are much slower than mighty Boeing or Airbus jets, and he would allow time for refueling stops. His aim was to see exactly how modern the modern transportation system is.

What Holmes began to see was that if he was going anyplace within 500 nautical miles (that is, on a trip from Newport News to Boston or anyplace nearer), his effective

The people racing to create new planes and new systems of transportation are nearly all men who learned to fly as teenagers.

speed by air averaged 75 knots, or somewhat faster than he could have traveled by car. (The aviation world uses nautical miles rather than statute miles to measure distance, and knots rather than mph to measure speed. A nautical mile is about 15 percent longer than a statute mile, and a knot is a nautical mile per hour.) Going by car, of course, would have been much less expensive than going by airplane, and it would have allowed him more flexibility in departure and return times. Given that airliners can travel through the sky at 400 knots, this is impressive testimony to how much of the average airline trip is spent other than in the air. Holmes's worst short journey was from Boston to Newport News when a string of thunderstorms caused delays throughout the hub-and-spoke system. That trip took twenty-seven hours, for an average speed of 15 knots. For trips of 1,000 miles Holmes averaged 125 knots. For trips of 2,000 miles he averaged 200 knots. Holmes thought, *I have my proof.*

For coast-to-coast hauls, of course, flying is superior to driving. And for people who live close to major airports, short-haul trips, too, can be fast on an airline. But for the past five years the effective speed of air travel, especially for short trips, has been declining, because passengers spend so much of their travel time doing something other than whooshing through the sky in a jet. This wasted time—in lines and traffic jams and crowded hubs—is what small planes going direct to small airports could reduce.

His obsessive travel logging was the culmination of a process that had begun in 1989. Bruce Holmes had recently turned forty, and he was wondering how to spend the rest of his working life. He had always been interested in airplanes: he took his first flight when he was five years old, soloed when he was in high school, and earned money in college giving flight lessons and transporting bodies for funeral homes. Holmes is a fit-looking man with a full head of straight, light-brown hair and a genial air. His style of speaking combines an engineer's precision with the sort of "busting paradigms" talk found at corporate seminars on the new economy.

Holmes had gone to work at NASA in 1974 and had become involved in various projects for the better design of airplanes. Although NASA's role in space exploration dominates news about the agency, its full name is the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and it is a major center for research into the technology of normal flight.

Through the late 1980s Holmes had been meeting with colleagues at the Langley Research Center. They gathered weekly at a neighborhood pizza place and called themselves the "GA mafia." GA stands for "general aviation," which covers the class of airplanes defined as belonging neither to the military nor to the airlines. Of the more than 200,000 civilian airplanes registered in the United States, about 95 percent are GA craft, and the great majority of those are small propeller planes. At its meetings the GA mafia discussed how the changes so dramatically transforming the worlds

of computers and communications might be applied to the relatively stagnant world of air transit. Its ideas became widely known and discussed in the tight community of aviation hobbyists and the businesses involved in building small planes, but these ideas have almost never been discussed in the general-interest media. During the very years when news about NASA mainly concerned the agency's struggle to recover from the 1986 explosion of the *Challenger*, some of its most creative efforts—and the ones likely to have the greatest impact on the daily lives of the American public—were those undertaken by the GA mafia.

In 1974 Jack Olcott, then a contributing editor of *Flying* magazine and the chairman of the NASA advisory committee on general aviation, had written a report recommending the development of an "advanced personal transportation system." By this he meant a new generation of small planes that ordinary travelers—"civilians," as opposed to pilots or aviation hobbyists—could view as a reasonable alternative to the airlines. Only a concerted technological drive could make this possible, he argued.

Olcott's paper inspired the GA mafia. The impending saturation of the hub-and-spoke airline system gave the group its motive to consider other air-travel systems, and the effects of ever cheaper computing power suggested new possibilities. The existing small-airplane fleet was too much like European sports cars of the 1950s: hand-built, defect-prone, tricky and expensive to maintain. Computer-driven "lean manufacturing" techniques were making modern cars far more reliable, and the GA mafia thought the same could happen with airplanes. The electronic guidance equipment in airplanes was famously expensive and unreliable: the use of light, inexpensive, dependable integrated circuits could solve that problem.

Perhaps most important, the GA mafia reasoned, the computer revolution could make small airplanes much safer than they had been. Although the civilian impression is that small airplanes fall out of the sky more or less at random, the truth is that the two great dangers are weather—thunderstorms or freezing clouds that coat the plane with ice and destroy its ability to fly—and pilot disorientation (now unfortunately familiar as the John Kennedy scenario), in which a pilot loses sight of the horizon and, if he has not had sufficient instrument training, can no longer tell up from down.

The group believed that weather hazards and pilot disorientation obscured a deeper problem: that pilots couldn't get enough information fast enough about the environment through which they flew. A shortage of information is exactly the sort of problem that computers were designed to correct. The first four satellites in what would eventually become the twenty-four-satellite Global Positioning System had gone up in 1978. With signals from the GPS, pilots (or anyone else) could navigate by means of moving-map systems like those in 1960s spy movies. While the GA mafia was meeting regularly, the GPS was still mainly for U.S. military use, and

in any case computing power was still too expensive for GPS navigation to be practical for most GA craft. But Holmes and the others knew that sooner or later the GPS would reach the GA market.

In 1989 Holmes had been temporarily transferred from Langley to NASA headquarters, in Washington, and felt he was in a position to act. That year he convened a conference of representatives from every company, research organization, and regulatory agency that might play a role in revitalizing GA and got them to agree on a white paper supporting new, safer, easier-to-fly planes. Holmes's boss in the aeronautics directorate of NASA, Roy Harris, was familiar with the discussions of the GA mafia. "He told me, 'Bruce, this project is so important, you really should work on it full time,'" Holmes said when we met, at the small Newport News airport. In 1992 Harris told Holmes that he could set up a "skunk works" research center within NASA to concentrate on future small-plane development with a few chosen allies. "Most of my peers thought I was nuts to consider it," Holmes told me, "because of the career risk." But he wanted to try something new.

So did Daniel Goldin. As a young engineer out of City College of New York, Goldin had gone to work at NASA in the early 1960s, during the glorious race-to-the-moon days. A few years later he joined the defense contractor TRW, and by the early 1990s he was in charge of its space-technology division. In 1992, with the presidential primaries well under way, George Bush invited Goldin back to NASA as its administrator.

Appointees who arrive very late in an administration rarely have sweeping agendas. But Goldin, who is a compact man with wavy gray hair, had also been thinking about big changes in small-plane travel. Within a few months of taking office Goldin was ready to address the 1992 Oshkosh air show and convention—the big annual event in the GA world, at which more than 150,000 aviation enthusiasts gather for a week of displays and seminars—and promise a bright future for general aviation. NASA would do everything it could, he said, to help make advanced technology practical and affordable for small planes.

In this nurturing environment Bruce Holmes began organizing what was called the AGATE project. The acronym stood for "advanced general aviation transportation experiments," and the idea was to stimulate competition among companies to bring new technologies to market. Holmes had made a little drawing of the cockpit in an ideal airplane of the future. It would have advanced guidance systems, which would give the pilot a graphical path to follow even if the real view outside was hidden by clouds or fog. It would have moving maps to let the pilot know exactly where he was—and where weather, mountains, and other planes were. It would be comfortable, like the interior of a modern car. It would have display panels, rather than old-fashioned steam-gauge dials, to report on the condition of the engine

and the electrical system and anything else the pilot needed to monitor. "For me that picture became a touchstone," Holmes told me. "The AGATE alliance came out of that sketch—and a lot of weekend-consuming telephone conversations with my fellow thinkers in government, industry, and trade associations."

In the 1990s Congress authorized \$63 million for research sponsored by AGATE. The money went to companies willing to develop demonstration models of the technology that would make small planes better. These innovations would include computer-generated displays that would let a pilot follow a "highway in the sky," even if he could not see anything out his window; ways to train pilots much more quickly and safely than had seemed possible before; ways to make planes less likely to crash and less likely to kill the occupants if they did; ways to make planes safer in an unexpected encounter with ice-filled clouds; and new manufacturing techniques and an across-the-board effort to make the costs of planes come down the way the costs of most other high-technology products had since the 1970s.

While Bruce Holmes was working as Mr. Inside for the small-plane crusade, Dan Goldin was Mr. Outside. In appearances before Congress and in speeches on the aviation-policy circuit he placed more and more emphasis on the importance of small-plane programs to NASA—and on the potentially revolutionary impact of AGATE and related efforts on the traveling public. As the economy developed and per capita income rose, he said, per capita travel rose even faster—and per capita demand for high-speed travel rose faster still. Air travel was thus both a cause and a consequence of a more advanced economy. If the air system bogged down, increasing numbers of people would be annoyed, and it was conceivable that economic productivity would slow as well.

It was this need for air-travel innovation that the NASA team thought small airplanes could fill. In practice this would mean the creation of what was still missing: small planes with the speed, safety, comfort, and comparatively low price to serve as a national air-taxi fleet. NASA's specific goals were these:

Small planes should be safe enough that normal, non-risk-taking people could think of trusting their lives to them. NASA wanted to cut the accident rate by 90 percent within twenty-five years. The planes should become fast enough that their effective speed was at least three times as great as that of cars on the highway. The existing small-plane fleet averaged 150 knots; that should be raised to 300 knots within a decade, and eventually to 450 knots, so that small planes could compete with the jetliners' speed. The planes should be more efficient and environmentally safer, using less fuel, creating less pollution, and generating less noise. They should be more consistent in their operations and far simpler to fly, much like cars that vary little from one rental site to another. And they should be radically more reliable and cheaper to maintain—following the

example of automobiles, with their quality revolution of the 1980s and 1990s.

NASA also set targets for the coverage and convenience a small-plane network should achieve. To make a difference a new system should serve every part of the United States more than fifty miles or an hour's drive from a hub airport. "Fortunately," Holmes says, "more than ninety-eight percent of the U.S. population lives within a thirty-minute drive of [one of] over five thousand public-use landing facilities." Although these small airports are far more evenly spaced across the country than the hubs, not enough of them are equipped for all-weather operation. The most important all-weather component is a precision-landing system, which lets pilots safely descend for a landing even if clouds are within a few hundred feet of the ground. Some 1,200 of the nation's public airports already have precision-landing systems. Holmes argues that if landing systems and air-traffic-control services were installed at many more airports, they could collectively handle some 500 million takeoffs and landings a year (versus 37 million now) without building a single new runway except at the most congested hub airports.

So the NASA of the late nineties had its plans laid: different airplanes, better engines, a bigger network of improved airports; and connected to these goals a variety of subsidiary ones, including faster, surer, more natural ways of training pilots, and improvements in manufacturing that aircraft companies could learn from car makers, much as they had during World War II. NASA officials knew that one change would matter more than any of the others: reducing the impression that small planes were deathtraps. Much of their research was directed toward radically simpler navigation systems. They were also interested in how the airplanes could better protect occupants when crashes occurred. This brought them in contact with the engineers at Cirrus Design.

THE PLANE WITH A PARACHUTE

When Ralph Nader published *Unsafe at Any Speed*, in 1965, the typical automobile interior was full of sharp edges and projections that proved lethal in collisions. In that era before seat belts, airbags, or collapsible steering wheels, a head-on crash often left a driver impaled on the steering column. Since the 1960s cars have acquired dozens of features that collectively make them more crashworthy. Although there are more—and more aggressive—drivers and many more miles driven than in the sixties, the total death toll from traffic accidents has dropped substantially. NASA was determined to bring some of the same safety features to small-airplane design.

Cirrus Design was founded in the mid-1980s by two brothers just out of college, Alan and Dale Klapmeier, who believed that they could do for the safety of small airplanes what seat belts, airbags, and other features had done for the safety of cars. By the early 1990s they were planning to introduce this new concept of safety with a small plane

called the SR20. The plane had four-point seat belts for all occupants, which were similar in effect to shoulder harnesses in cars. It had a different kind of airframe, to absorb energy and make sudden impacts easier to survive—part of a NASA project to see whether the shock of a plane's slamming into a bank of trees or a wall could be directed away from the passengers, as in a modern car.

And there was one other innovation. This was the most startling feature and the one that caused the most bickering and sneering from the rest of the industry: a parachute for the entire plane. The decision to thus equip the SR20 was based on an episode that had nearly killed the company's president, Alan Klapmeier.

On May 2, 1984, when Klapmeier was twenty-five, he was taking a flying lesson at the Sauk-Prairie airport, just north of Madison, Wisconsin. It was late afternoon, and the sun was low in the sky. Klapmeier was in the pilot's seat, with an instructor sitting next to him. This was advanced training—Klapmeier had been flying for years.

He had just taken off and was turning away from the airport, with the sun at his back. A plane was nearing the airport from the opposite direction, flying with the sun in the pilot's face. The other pilot, a friend of Klapmeier's, was in a variant of the Piper Cub called the PA-7, with no radio installed. Pilots may fly NRDO, or "no radio," as long as they stay out of certain kinds of controlled airspace.

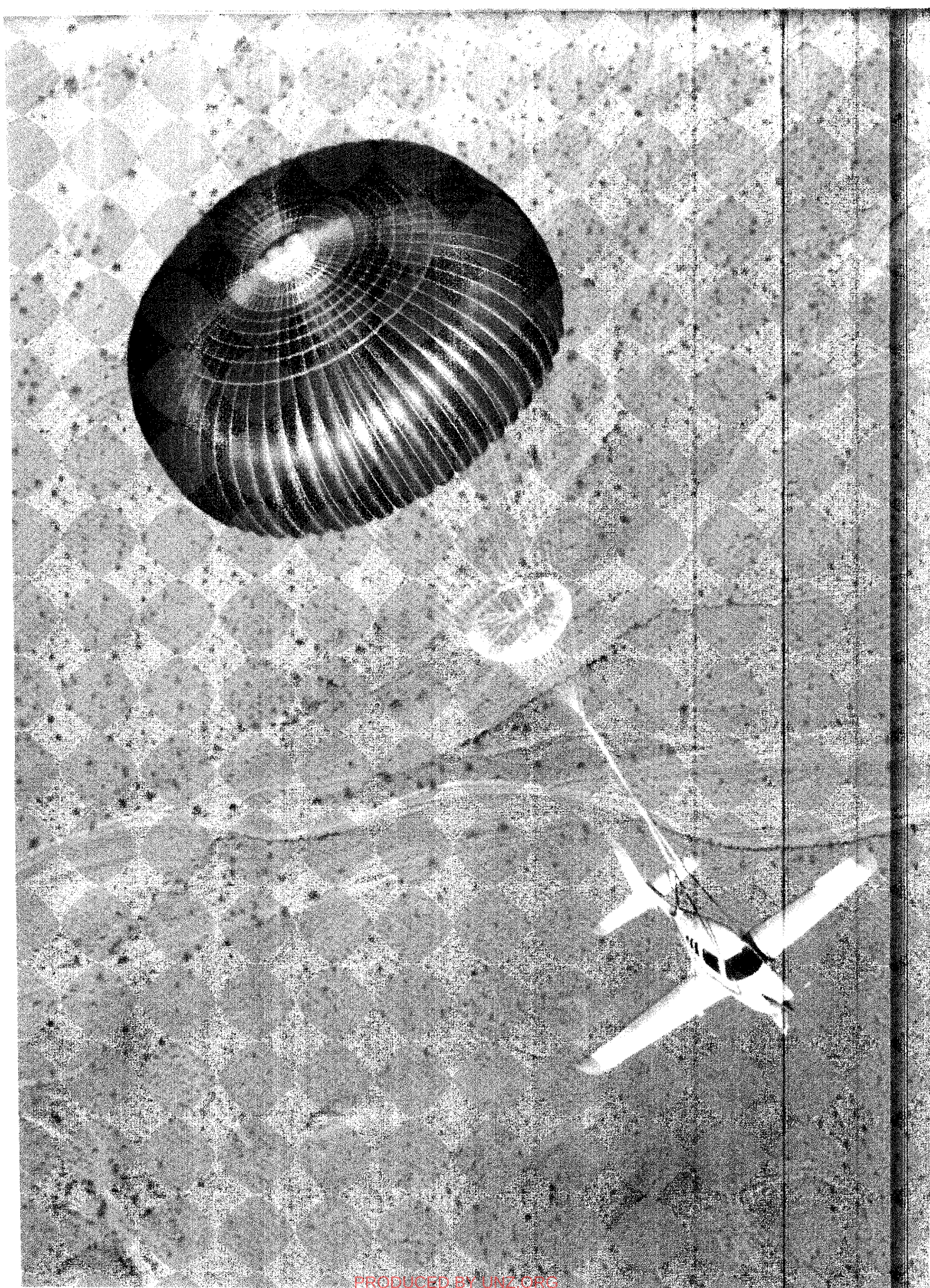
Every person who learns to fly is amazed by the reality of the "big sky"—you may fly for hours across several states and not see another plane except around airports. Most midair collisions therefore happen within five miles of an airport, and most happen in good weather, since on bad-weather days the planes are flying on instrument flight plans and are being separated by a controller's instructions.

On this clear spring day, near an airport, Klapmeier's plane collided with the other one. His wing sliced through the strut that supported the other plane's wing. That plane lost its ability to fly and spun into the ground, killing the pilot.

Klapmeier had to ram the control yoke hard to the left to keep his plane, which had lost part of its right wing, on course back toward the runway. As he neared a landing, Klapmeier realized that he had pushed the yoke as far left as it would go. Each of the next few seconds contained its own complete drama. Act I: the yoke would go no farther. Act II: the plane, gliding above the runway, began rolling over to the right. Act IV: the plane rolled so far that its disabled wing struck the ground, sending the craft into a cartwheeling crash. But Act IV never happened, because in Act III, with a second to spare, Klapmeier felt the wheels touch the runway.

From such an episode many people would draw the conclusion that flying was too great a risk ever to expose themselves to it again. Alan Klapmeier concluded that existing small planes were too risky and had to be made safer.

A stocky, square-faced man with glasses and bushy, blondish hair, Klapmeier has a grin that often edges into a



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smirk. Although he is forty-one, he gives the impression of a star student who would get in trouble for making wisecracks when the teacher's back was turned. I have met him half a dozen times over the past two years, at his company's headquarters, in Duluth, and at airplane shows. His brother, Dale, three years younger, is taller, lankier, and more taciturn—a man who likes fast airplanes, automobiles, and motorcycles. When I saw him one day at the factory wearing a black-leather jacket and heavy boots, I felt I had glimpsed him in his natural state.

The SR20 had a big moving map in the cockpit to help the pilot keep track of where he was going, and its wings employed a novel design that made the plane less likely to go into dangerous spins. But because of his narrow escape at Sauk-Prairie, Alan Klapmeier was determined to bring to his company's airplane some last-ditch safety measure for circumstances in which mechanical failure, reckless judgment, or simple bad luck put the pilot in an impossible situation. "It kind of goes against the pilot culture to admit that people are going to make mistakes," he told me. One of the most striking traits of aviation culture is the extensive study of accidents in which pilots make mistakes and die. The idea is for still-living pilots to learn the pitfalls they must avoid. Klapmeier was saying that the usual emphasis on training and caution is fine, but it isn't the most effective way to increase the number of people who survive small-plane emergencies.

The military's solution to this problem was ejection seats, but these were heavy and expensive, and would not work with planes that had solid roofs rather than canopies to blow off. (They are also violent: ejection often breaks bones.) Nor did it make sense to equip every passenger in a cramped plane with a personal parachute, like those that early air-mail pilots wore. Among other problems, the doors on small planes are not made for fast or easy escape, especially from the back.

Since the sixties certain "ultralight" planes had been equipped with rescue parachutes for the planes as a whole. Ultralights are the inexpensive homebuilt craft that satisfy many people's desire to fly but are not regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration. They crash with alarming frequency. In more than a hundred cases the pilots of ultralights have been saved by these parachutes. The Klapmeiers decided that a whole-plane parachute would come as standard equipment on the SR20—not an extra-price option,

not something that could be either selected or disabled later on, but an integral part of the plane, like the energy-absorbing bumpers in modern cars. The SR20 is now the first and only "certified" plane—that is, one approved by the FAA for general sale—so equipped.

"If we had known exactly how hard this was going to be, we wouldn't have done it," Paul Johnston, Cirrus's chief engineer, told me, about five years after Cirrus decided to build a plane with a parachute inside. Johnston is a high-strung, fidgety person with a mop of unruly dark hair, whom others in the company call their most gifted designer and engineer. "We probably would have said, Okay, let's pursue this as a goal, but in the meantime let's get the first plane out the door."

The problem with a whole-plane parachute is that no one had made it work quite this way before. The Cirrus airplane would be four or five times heavier than the typical ultralight, and it would be going much faster when the

parachute needed to arrest a fall. The parachute would therefore have to be much bigger and stronger, and a system designed for ultralights would have to be scaled up to handle the weight of a four-person plane.

The testing team spent weeks in the summer of 1997 in the high desert of southern California. Because the design of the SR20 was still being worked on, they had no actual airplane to use for tests. So they would attach parachutes to pallets covered with drums full of sand, load the pallets into a C-123 cargo plane, shove them out the

back, let them free-fall until they reached nearly 200 mph, and then push a switch to deploy the chutes. They filmed the results. "We drilled a lot of holes in the desert in those days," Paul Johnston told me. "We put a lot of sand back in."

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airport closest to their home or office and flying direct to the small airport closest to their destination. This would be made possible by a product now missing from the vast array of flying devices: small planes that offer much of the speed and as much as possible of the safety of big airliners, at a small fraction of the cost of today's corporate jets.

The people racing to create new systems of air transportation are nearly all men who learned to fly as teenagers. I can't recall one I've interviewed who didn't have a poster of an airplane on his office wall or a little model plane on his desk. They think about airplanes all the time, and many say they started their companies because they wanted to have a different kind of plane to fly. Some of them argue, or at least dream, that if they make new planes that are nice enough (more comfortable, easier to fly, less expensive, above all much safer than today's small aircraft seem to be), then larger numbers of the public will eventually decide to become pilots themselves. Those pilots could then take advantage of the now underused network of small airports and relieve strain on the big hubs.

Whether or not the pilot population increases in the long run, for the foreseeable future small planes will make a difference mainly if they constitute the operating fleet for a new national system of air taxis. A supply of inexpensive, safe, comfortable small planes, flown by hired pilots and available at rates comparable to today's coach air fares, could bring freedom and convenience to a broader share of the traveling public than the class to whom "flying commercial" is a badge of shame.

Two of the companies deeply involved in the race to create this fleet are the Cirrus Design Corporation, of Duluth, Minnesota, and Eclipse Aviation, of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Cirrus is the first company to begin large-scale production of a genuinely new small airplane, which it calls the SR20. Eclipse is the company that is moving fastest toward the production of jet planes priced at well under a million dollars apiece, versus at least three to four times that much for all competitors. Its first plane is scheduled for delivery in 2003. Several other companies are working toward the same goal: Lancair, of Bend, Oregon, which makes a small, fast, propeller-driven plane like the SR20; Safire Aircraft, of West Palm Beach, Florida, which is planning a small jet to compete with the Eclipse; established airplane makers, including Cessna, of Wichita, Kansas, and newcomers such as Honda and Toyota, of Japan, which are all considering developing the new class of planes; and equipment manufacturers, such as Avidyne, of Lincoln, Massachusetts, and Garmin, of Olathe, Kansas, which are producing advanced electronic systems for use in the new planes. But for the moment Cirrus and Eclipse are setting the pace.

These companies face all the standard perils of start-ups in complicated manufacturing industries. For Cirrus the main challenge is a continuing struggle to raise working capital. For Eclipse it is to deliver the product it has promised to investors and customers. But if these companies falter, some of the others are likely to take their place. Building airplanes has for decades been a notorious way to lose money. The new contenders believe that this time market conditions and technological possibilities are on their side.

THE GENERAL-AVIATION MAFIA

In the fall of 1998 Bruce Holmes noticed that it was taking him longer and longer to get where he wanted to go. Holmes, an official at NASA, had been trained as an engineer, and his first instinct was to quantify and measure. So he decided to use himself as a kind of test probe to see exactly what had happened to the air-transportation system.

Holmes lived in Newport News, Virginia, near his work at NASA's Langley Research Center. When he took a business or personal trip that involved air travel, he would note the exact time he stepped out the door. He would glance at his watch at different stages of his journey: when he got to the airport, after he'd gone through the check-in line, after he'd found a

seat on the plane, and after the plane had finally begun to roll. He would record the time the plane landed and would make a final entry when he reached the hotel, office, or meeting site that was his destination.

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"You know W. Edwards Deming?" Holmes asked when he described this ritual to me, at our first meeting last year. Deming was an American consultant whose prime analytic tool in the study of how to increase productivity was taking minute measurements at each stage of a factory's production process. "My friends like to say, 'Deming would be proud!'"

The log was just the beginning. When the trip was over, Holmes would calculate the "great circle" distance (what most people would call "as the crow flies") between his starting point and his destination and compare it with the total time spent en route; the result was his effective travel speed, on what he calls a "doorstep to destination" basis. Holmes, himself a pilot, would then use flight-planning software to see how long the same trip would have taken in a variety of modest propeller-driven planes—not corporate jets, not million-dollar turboprops, but a typical Cessna, Mooney, or Beech Bonanza. These planes are much slower than mighty Boeing or Airbus jets, and he would allow time for refueling stops. His aim was to see exactly how modern the modern transportation system is.

What Holmes began to see was that if he was going anywhere within 500 nautical miles (that is, on a trip from Newport News to Boston or anywhere nearer), his effective

speed by air averaged 75 knots, or somewhat faster than he could have traveled by car. (The aviation world uses nautical miles rather than statute miles to measure distance, and knots rather than mph to measure speed. A nautical mile is about 15 percent longer than a statute mile, and a knot is a nautical mile per hour.) Going by car, of course, would have been much less expensive than going by airplane, and it would have allowed him more flexibility in departure and return times. Given that airliners can travel through the sky at 400 knots, this is impressive testimony to how much of the average airline trip is spent other than in the air. Holmes's worst short journey was from Boston to Newport News when a string of thunderstorms caused delays throughout the hub-and-spoke system. That trip took twenty-seven hours, for an average speed of 15 knots. For trips of 1,000 miles Holmes averaged 125 knots. For trips of 2,000 miles he averaged 200 knots. Holmes thought, *I have my proof.*

For coast-to-coast hauls, of course, flying is superior to driving. And for people who live close to major airports, short-haul trips, too, can be fast on an airline. But for the past five years the effective speed of air travel, especially for short trips, has been declining, because passengers spend so much of their travel time doing something other than whooshing through the sky in a jet. This wasted time—in lines and traffic jams and crowded hubs—is what small planes going direct to small airports could reduce.

His obsessive travel logging was the culmination of a process that had begun in 1989. Bruce Holmes had recently turned forty, and he was wondering how to spend the rest of his working life. He had always been interested in airplanes: he took his first flight when he was five years old, soloed when he was in high school, and earned money in college giving flight lessons and transporting bodies for funeral homes. Holmes is a fit-looking man with a full head of straight, light-brown hair and a genial air. His style of speaking combines an engineer's precision with the sort of "busting paradigms" talk found at corporate seminars on the new economy.

Holmes had gone to work at NASA in 1974 and had become involved in various projects for the better design of airplanes. Although NASA's role in space exploration dominates news about the agency, its full name is the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and it is a major center for research into the technology of normal flight.

Through the late 1980s Holmes had been meeting with colleagues at the Langley Research Center. They gathered weekly at a neighborhood pizza place and called themselves the "GA mafia." GA stands for "general aviation," which covers the class of airplanes defined as belonging neither to the military nor to the airlines. Of the more than 200,000 civilian airplanes registered in the United States, about 95 percent are GA craft, and the great majority of those are small propeller planes. At its meetings the GA mafia discussed how the changes so dramatically transforming the worlds

of computers and communications might be applied to the relatively stagnant world of air transit. Its ideas became widely known and discussed in the tight community of aviation hobbyists and the businesses involved in building small planes, but these ideas have almost never been discussed in the general-interest media. During the very years when news about NASA mainly concerned the agency's struggle to recover from the 1986 explosion of the *Challenger*, some of its most creative efforts—and the ones likely to have the greatest impact on the daily lives of the American public—were those undertaken by the GA mafia.

In 1974 Jack Olcott, then a contributing editor of *Flying* magazine and the chairman of the NASA advisory committee on general aviation, had written a report recommending the development of an "advanced personal transportation system." By this he meant a new generation of small planes that ordinary travelers—"civilians," as opposed to pilots or aviation hobbyists—could view as a reasonable alternative to the airlines. Only a concerted technological drive could make this possible, he argued.

Olcott's paper inspired the GA mafia. The impending saturation of the hub-and-spoke airline system gave the group its motive to consider other air-travel systems, and the effects of ever cheaper computing power suggested new possibilities. The existing small-airplane fleet was too much like European sports cars of the 1950s: hand-built, defect-prone, tricky and expensive to maintain. Computer-driven "lean manufacturing" techniques were making modern cars far more reliable, and the GA mafia thought the same could happen with airplanes. The electronic guidance equipment in airplanes was famously expensive and unreliable: the use of light, inexpensive, dependable integrated circuits could solve that problem.

Perhaps most important, the GA mafia reasoned, the computer revolution could make small airplanes much safer than they had been. Although the civilian impression is that small airplanes fall out of the sky more or less at random, the truth is that the two great dangers are weather—thunderstorms or freezing clouds that coat the plane with ice and destroy its ability to fly—and pilot disorientation (now unfortunately familiar as the John Kennedy scenario), in which a pilot loses sight of the horizon and, if he has not had sufficient instrument training, can no longer tell up from down.

The group believed that weather hazards and pilot disorientation obscured a deeper problem: that pilots couldn't get enough information fast enough about the environment through which they flew. A shortage of information is exactly the sort of problem that computers were designed to correct. The first four satellites in what would eventually become the twenty-four-satellite Global Positioning System had gone up in 1978. With signals from the GPS, pilots (or anyone else) could navigate by means of moving-map systems like those in 1960s spy movies. While the GA mafia was meeting regularly, the GPS was still mainly for U.S. military use, and

in any case computing power was still too expensive for GPS navigation to be practical for most GA craft. But Holmes and the others knew that sooner or later the GPS would reach the GA market.

In 1989 Holmes had been temporarily transferred from Langley to NASA headquarters, in Washington, and felt he was in a position to act. That year he convened a conference of representatives from every company, research organization, and regulatory agency that might play a role in revitalizing GA and got them to agree on a white paper supporting new, safer, easier-to-fly planes. Holmes's boss in the aeronautics directorate of NASA, Roy Harris, was familiar with the discussions of the GA mafia. "He told me, 'Bruce, this project is so important, you really should work on it full time,'" Holmes said when we met, at the small Newport News airport. In 1992 Harris told Holmes that he could set up a "skunk works" research center within NASA to concentrate on future small-plane development with a few chosen allies. "Most of my peers thought I was nuts to consider it," Holmes told me, "because of the career risk." But he wanted to try something new.

So did Daniel Goldin. As a young engineer out of City College of New York, Goldin had gone to work at NASA in the early 1960s, during the glorious race-to-the-moon days. A few years later he joined the defense contractor TRW, and by the early 1990s he was in charge of its space-technology division. In 1992, with the presidential primaries well under way, George Bush invited Goldin back to NASA as its administrator.

Appointees who arrive very late in an administration rarely have sweeping agendas. But Goldin, who is a compact man with wavy gray hair, had also been thinking about big changes in small-plane travel. Within a few months of taking office Goldin was ready to address the 1992 Oshkosh air show and convention—the big annual event in the GA world, at which more than 150,000 aviation enthusiasts gather for a week of displays and seminars—and promise a bright future for general aviation. NASA would do everything it could, he said, to help make advanced technology practical and affordable for small planes.

In this nurturing environment Bruce Holmes began organizing what was called the AGATE project. The acronym stood for "advanced general aviation transportation experiments," and the idea was to stimulate competition among companies to bring new technologies to market. Holmes had made a little drawing of the cockpit in an ideal airplane of the future. It would have advanced guidance systems, which would give the pilot a graphical path to follow even if the real view outside was hidden by clouds or fog. It would have moving maps to let the pilot know exactly where he was—and where weather, mountains, and other planes were. It would be comfortable, like the interior of a modern car. It would have display panels, rather than old-fashioned steam-gauge dials, to report on the condition of the engine

and the electrical system and anything else the pilot needed to monitor. "For me that picture became a touchstone," Holmes told me. "The AGATE alliance came out of that sketch—and a lot of weekend-consuming telephone conversations with my fellow thinkers in government, industry, and trade associations."

In the 1990s Congress authorized \$63 million for research sponsored by AGATE. The money went to companies willing to develop demonstration models of the technology that would make small planes better. These innovations would include computer-generated displays that would let a pilot follow a "highway in the sky," even if he could not see anything out his window; ways to train pilots much more quickly and safely than had seemed possible before; ways to make planes less likely to crash and less likely to kill the occupants if they did; ways to make planes safer in an unexpected encounter with ice-filled clouds; and new manufacturing techniques and an across-the-board effort to make the costs of planes come down the way the costs of most other high-technology products had since the 1970s.

While Bruce Holmes was working as Mr. Inside for the small-plane crusade, Dan Goldin was Mr. Outside. In appearances before Congress and in speeches on the aviation-policy circuit he placed more and more emphasis on the importance of small-plane programs to NASA—and on the potentially revolutionary impact of AGATE and related efforts on the traveling public. As the economy developed and per capita income rose, he said, per capita travel rose even faster—and per capita demand for high-speed travel rose faster still. Air travel was thus both a cause and a consequence of a more advanced economy. If the air system bogged down, increasing numbers of people would be annoyed, and it was conceivable that economic productivity would slow as well.

It was this need for air-travel innovation that the NASA team thought small airplanes could fill. In practice this would mean the creation of what was still missing: small planes with the speed, safety, comfort, and comparatively low price to serve as a national air-taxi fleet. NASA's specific goals were these:

Small planes should be safe enough that normal, non-risk-taking people could think of trusting their lives to them. NASA wanted to cut the accident rate by 90 percent within twenty-five years. The planes should become fast enough that their effective speed was at least three times as great as that of cars on the highway. The existing small-plane fleet averaged 150 knots; that should be raised to 300 knots within a decade, and eventually to 450 knots, so that small planes could compete with the jetliners' speed. The planes should be more efficient and environmentally safer, using less fuel, creating less pollution, and generating less noise. They should be more consistent in their operations and far simpler to fly, much like cars that vary little from one rental site to another. And they should be radically more reliable and cheaper to maintain—following the

example of automobiles, with their quality revolution of the 1980s and 1990s.

NASA also set targets for the coverage and convenience a small-plane network should achieve. To make a difference a new system should serve every part of the United States more than fifty miles or an hour's drive from a hub airport. "Fortunately," Holmes says, "more than ninety-eight percent of the U.S. population lives within a thirty-minute drive of [one of] over five thousand public-use landing facilities." Although these small airports are far more evenly spaced across the country than the hubs, not enough of them are equipped for all-weather operation. The most important all-weather component is a precision-landing system, which lets pilots safely descend for a landing even if clouds are within a few hundred feet of the ground. Some 1,200 of the nation's public airports already have precision-landing systems. Holmes argues that if landing systems and air-traffic-control services were installed at many more airports, they could collectively handle some 500 million takeoffs and landings a year (versus 37 million now) without building a single new runway except at the most congested hub airports.

So the NASA of the late nineties had its plans laid: different airplanes, better engines, a bigger network of improved airports; and connected to these goals a variety of subsidiary ones, including faster, surer, more natural ways of training pilots, and improvements in manufacturing that aircraft companies could learn from car makers, much as they had during World War II. NASA officials knew that one change would matter more than any of the others: reducing the impression that small planes were deathtraps. Much of their research was directed toward radically simpler navigation systems. They were also interested in how the airplanes could better protect occupants when crashes occurred. This brought them in contact with the engineers at Cirrus Design.

THE PLANE WITH A PARACHUTE

When Ralph Nader published *Unsafe at Any Speed*, in 1965, the typical automobile interior was full of sharp edges and projections that proved lethal in collisions. In that era before seat belts, airbags, or collapsible steering wheels, a head-on crash often left a driver impaled on the steering column. Since the 1960s cars have acquired dozens of features that collectively make them more crashworthy. Although there are more—and more aggressive—drivers and many more miles driven than in the sixties, the total death toll from traffic accidents has dropped substantially. NASA was determined to bring some of the same safety features to small-airplane design.

Cirrus Design was founded in the mid-1980s by two brothers just out of college, Alan and Dale Klapmeier, who believed that they could do for the safety of small airplanes what seat belts, airbags, and other features had done for the safety of cars. By the early 1990s they were planning to introduce this new concept of safety with a small plane

called the SR20. The plane had four-point seat belts for all occupants, which were similar in effect to shoulder harnesses in cars. It had a different kind of airframe, to absorb energy and make sudden impacts easier to survive—part of a NASA project to see whether the shock of a plane's slamming into a bank of trees or a wall could be directed away from the passengers, as in a modern car.

And there was one other innovation. This was the most startling feature and the one that caused the most bickering and sneering from the rest of the industry: a parachute for the entire plane. The decision to thus equip the SR20 was based on an episode that had nearly killed the company's president, Alan Klapmeier.

On May 2, 1984, when Klapmeier was twenty-five, he was taking a flying lesson at the Sauk-Prairie airport, just north of Madison, Wisconsin. It was late afternoon, and the sun was low in the sky. Klapmeier was in the pilot's seat, with an instructor sitting next to him. This was advanced training—Klapmeier had been flying for years.

He had just taken off and was turning away from the airport, with the sun at his back. A plane was nearing the airport from the opposite direction, flying with the sun in the pilot's face. The other pilot, a friend of Klapmeier's, was in a variant of the Piper Cub called the PA-7, with no radio installed. Pilots may fly NRDO, or "no radio," as long as they stay out of certain kinds of controlled airspace.

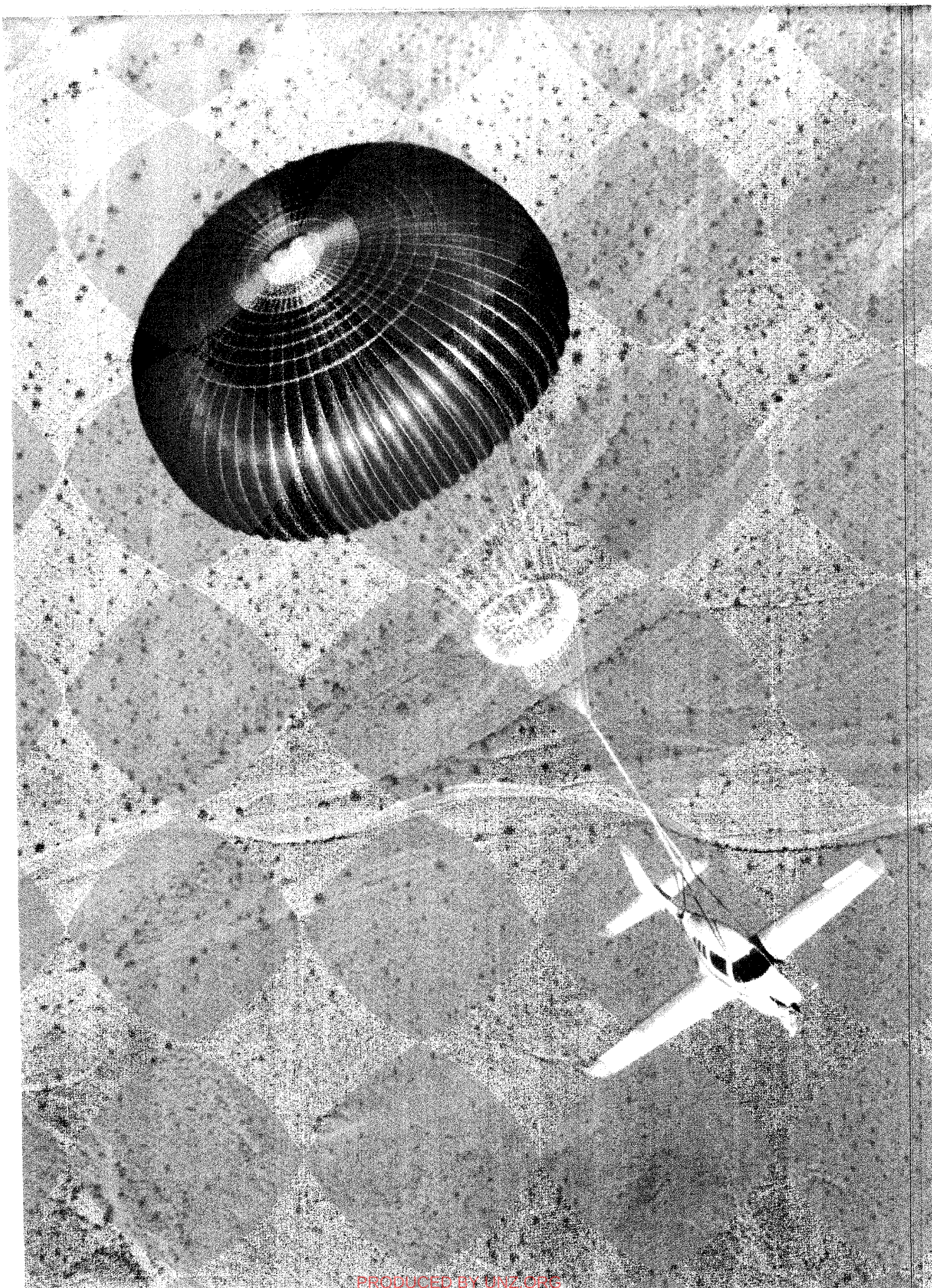
Every person who learns to fly is amazed by the reality of the "big sky"—you may fly for hours across several states and not see another plane except around airports. Most midair collisions therefore happen within five miles of an airport, and most happen in good weather, since on bad-weather days the planes are flying on instrument flight plans and are being separated by a controller's instructions.

On this clear spring day, near an airport, Klapmeier's plane collided with the other one. His wing sliced through the strut that supported the other plane's wing. That plane lost its ability to fly and spun into the ground, killing the pilot.

Klapmeier had to ram the control yoke hard to the left to keep his plane, which had lost part of its right wing, on course back toward the runway. As he neared a landing, Klapmeier realized that he had pushed the yoke as far left as it would go. Each of the next few seconds contained its own complete drama. Act I: the yoke would go no farther. Act II: the plane, gliding above the runway, began rolling over to the right. Act IV: the plane rolled so far that its disabled wing struck the ground, sending the craft into a cartwheeling crash. But Act IV never happened, because in Act III, with a second to spare, Klapmeier felt the wheels touch the runway.

From such an episode many people would draw the conclusion that flying was too great a risk ever to expose themselves to it again. Alan Klapmeier concluded that existing small planes were too risky and had to be made safer.

A stocky, square-faced man with glasses and bushy, blondish hair, Klapmeier has a grin that often edges into a



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smirk. Although he is forty-one, he gives the impression of a star student who would get in trouble for making wise-cracks when the teacher's back was turned. I have met him half a dozen times over the past two years, at his company's headquarters, in Duluth, and at airplane shows. His brother, Dale, three years younger, is taller, lankier, and more taciturn—a man who likes fast airplanes, automobiles, and motorcycles. When I saw him one day at the factory wearing a black-leather jacket and heavy boots, I felt I had glimpsed him in his natural state.

The SR20 had a big moving map in the cockpit to help the pilot keep track of where he was going, and its wings employed a novel design that made the plane less likely to go into dangerous spins. But because of his narrow escape at Sauk-Prairie, Alan Klapmeier was determined to bring to his company's airplane some last-ditch safety measure for circumstances in which mechanical failure, reckless judgment, or simple bad luck put the pilot in an impossible situation. "It kind of goes against the pilot culture to admit that people are going to make mistakes," he told me. One of the most striking traits of aviation culture is the extensive study of accidents in which pilots make mistakes and die. The idea is for still-living pilots to learn the pitfalls they must avoid. Klapmeier was saying that the usual emphasis on training and caution is fine, but it isn't the most effective way to increase the number of people who survive small-plane emergencies.

The military's solution to this problem was ejection seats, but these were heavy and expensive, and would not work with planes that had solid roofs rather than canopies to blow off. (They are also violent: ejection often breaks bones.) Nor did it make sense to equip every passenger in a cramped plane with a personal parachute, like those that early air-mail pilots wore. Among other problems, the doors on small planes are not made for fast or easy escape, especially from the back.

Since the sixties certain "ultralight" planes had been equipped with rescue parachutes for the planes as a whole. Ultralights are the inexpensive homebuilt craft that satisfy many people's desire to fly but are not regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration. They crash with alarming frequency. In more than a hundred cases the pilots of ultralights have been saved by these parachutes. The Klapmeiers decided that a whole-plane parachute would come as standard equipment on the SR20—not an extra-price option,

not something that could be either selected or disabled later on, but an integral part of the plane, like the energy-absorbing bumpers in modern cars. The SR20 is now the first and only "certified" plane—that is, one approved by the FAA for general sale—so equipped.

"If we had known exactly how hard this was going to be, we wouldn't have done it," Paul Johnston, Cirrus's chief engineer, told me, about five years after Cirrus decided to build a plane with a parachute inside. Johnston is a high-strung, fidgety person with a mop of unruly dark hair, whom others in the company call their most gifted designer and engineer. "We probably would have said, Okay, let's pursue this as a goal, but in the meantime let's get the first plane out the door."

The problem with a whole-plane parachute is that no one had made it work quite this way before. The Cirrus airplane would be four or five times heavier than the typical ultralight, and it would be going much faster when the

parachute needed to arrest a fall. The parachute would therefore have to be much bigger and stronger, and a system designed for ultralights would have to be scaled up to handle the weight of a four-person plane.

The testing team spent weeks in the summer of 1997 in the high desert of southern California. Because the design of the SR20 was still being worked on, they had no actual airplane to use for tests. So they would attach parachutes to pallets covered with drums full of sand, load the pallets into a C-123 cargo plane, shove them out the

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security partnership, the United States is still the FSM's chief benefactor, supplying the bulk of its revenue—about \$100 million—in aid each year. The bureaucracy required to manage and distribute this windfall continues to be Kosrae's single largest employer. Few if any of its jobs demand the skill or physical effort required by the traditional work of fishing and farming. Physical exertion has been further discouraged by expansion of the coastal road and the steady importation of cars, some bought with the help of government money. To walk in Kosrae is to announce that one is too poor to ride, and Kosraeans offer a lift to every casual stroller.

This newfound convenience comes at a high price, as a visit to Kosrae's state hospital revealed. A low-slung concrete structure with greasy windows and no air-conditioning, it is poorly equipped to handle anything but basic health needs. Patients with serious problems are airlifted to Guam or the Philippines. The hospital director, a former Vice President of Micronesia, confessed to us that he and his wife travel abroad for even routine checkups.

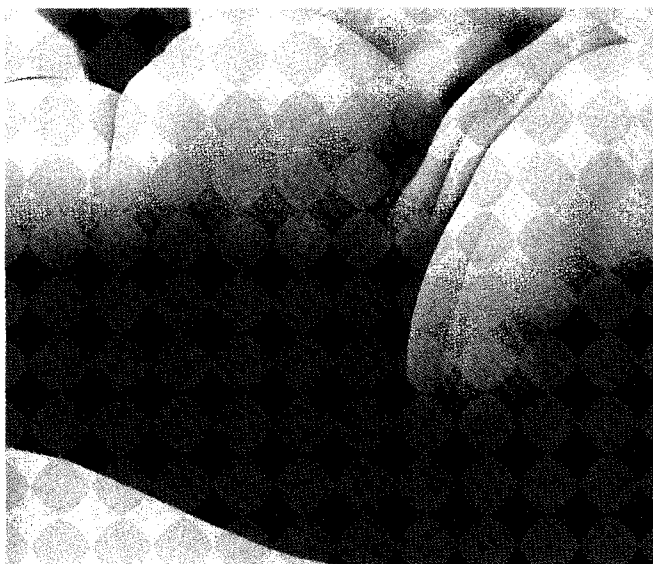
The hospital's inpatient ward has perhaps two dozen beds, and nineteen were occupied on the morning we visited. Thirteen people were there for complications of diet-related diabetes and two for heart conditions. Paul Skilling, a Kosraean family doctor, lamented that cases of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease are as common as coconuts on his island. Another doctor half joked that even health-care professionals are at risk. "Look at me," he said, pointing to his paunch. "I am myself obese. My body-mass index is thirty-two. How long before I have these diseases?"

The doctor was indeed obese, but his body-mass index was only slightly higher than average for a Kosraean adult. In 1993–1994 the Micronesian Department of Health, with funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, screened almost all the adults on the island and found that nearly 85 percent of those aged forty-five to sixty-four were obese. Non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, heart disease, and hypertension are closely linked to obesity, so it is perhaps not surprising that more than a quarter of Kosraeans in this age group were also diabetic, and more than a third suffered from high blood pressure. (Non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, or NIDDM, the kind that afflicts Micronesia, is also known as Type II or adult-onset diabetes; "diabetes" here refers to this type.) Vita

Skilling, the island's chief of preventive health services, told us that efforts to reverse this trend have been disappointing. "Here you buy imported food in the store to show that you have money," she said. "Even if you don't have much money, you can buy turkey tails."

In Kosrae 90 percent of adult surgical admissions are linked to diabetes, and of these many are for amputations necessitated by vascular breakdown. There are more cases of renal failure than the hospital can handle, and cardiovascular disease is pervasive. And in Kosrae ill health hits early—frequently men and women have a first heart attack in their late twenties.

New World syndrome has taken hold throughout much of the South Pacific. The problem in Kosrae pales by comparison with that in the Republic of



Nauru, a tiny, crowded island known as the Kuwait of the South Pacific. Nauru's citizens grew rich from the mining of phosphate deposits, which long ago eclipsed fishing as the state's major revenue source and are now nearly depleted. This rocky island's few patches of arable land were laid waste years ago by mining, so Nauruans subsist almost entirely on imports. Prosperity has brought them Japanese televisions, German luxury sedans, and

Australian filet mignon. It has also brought them what Auerbach calls "the worst of 1950s American cuisine"—processed foods with plenty of fat, salt, sugar, and refined starches. As a result Nauruans have among the highest rates of obesity and diabetes on the planet, and a life expectancy of only fifty-five. In contrast, the region's poorest nation—Kiribati, thirty-three islands that straddle the Equator, with little money for imported food or anything else—has in its rural regions the lowest rates of noncommunicable disease in the South Pacific.

Scientists have studied the health status of native peoples in the South Pacific for decades, and have noted the explosion of diet-related disease in Nauru and Micronesia, among other islands. But the CDC-supported effort seven years ago was the first to offer systematic health screening of adults in the islands of the FSM. Auerbach was in charge of that screening. He told me that it had made possible the early identification and treatment of health problems, and had helped to alert the islanders to the perils and prevention of noncommunicable illnesses. Among the

small victories were an early-morning walking program for adult women and the Micronesian One Diet Fits All Today campaign, through which Kosraeans are encouraged to avoid imported food in favor of locally grown fruits, vegetables, tubers, and fish. Vita Skilling said that although MODFAT had helped some patients to reduce their blood pressure and dependence on diabetes medication, she did not know whether the program had had a wide impact. She invited us to attend a party for a group of women who had recently “graduated” from the MODFAT program. We arrived in time for lunch and were offered fresh fish, breadfruit, fried chicken, orange soda, candy, and apple pie. Most of the graduates were hugely obese. Apparently the “healthy diet” message had gotten muddled. The walking program, although enthusiastically endorsed by the clinicians I spoke to, was in May still suspended “for the Christmas holiday.”

Paul Zimmet, an Australian physician and researcher who specializes in the study of noncommunicable diseases, wrote in 1996 that “the [non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus] global epidemic is just the tip of a massive social problem now facing developing countries.” Zimmet implicated the “coca-colonization” that has devastated local customs and economies and led to ill health. Rates of obesity and diabetes have skyrocketed around the globe, but particularly among traditional peoples in transition—Polynesians, Native Americans, and aboriginal Australians; Asian Indian emigrants to Fiji, South Africa, and Britain; and Chinese emigrants to Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

Although the rapid introduction of processed foods and other conveniences is certainly the proximate force behind this trend, scientists are also looking at genetic components. Jeffrey Friedman, a professor and the head of the Laboratory of Molecular Genetics at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at Rockefeller University, in New York, is investigating why some Kosraeans manage to escape the hazards of coca-colonization while others succumb. To Friedman and his team, the interesting question is not why so many sedentary, office-bound, Spam-loving Kosraeans are obese but why not all of them are.

Kosraeans, like all natives of Micronesia, trace their ancestry back 2,000 years to a handful of Indo-Malayan mariners. Driven by fear, religious persecution, greed, or foolhardiness, this small band settled the Pacific. Those who landed on Kosrae developed a feudal society that went largely unnoticed by the West until 1824, when a French research vessel, the *Coquille*, dropped anchor nearby. Rene Primevere Lesson, the ship’s doctor, described Kosraeans as “advanced people of a high civilization, to judge from the vestiges of customs, tradition such as the authority of the chiefs, classes of society, and the remnants of the arts which they still practice.” The women, he wrote, had “black

eyes full of fire and a mouth full of superb teeth ... but a tendency to become fat.” He also observed that considering the island’s bounty, its population of about 3,000 was surprisingly small. (Easter Island, in Polynesia, was then supporting a population of at least 7,000 with roughly the same land mass and a less hospitable climate.) Studies later supported local lore that a much larger population had been diminished by starvation after typhoons devastated the island’s food supply. The population continued to dwindle throughout the nineteenth century, as Kosrae became an increasingly popular base for pirates and New England whalers, who brought with them tobacco and whisky—and infectious diseases. By 1910 only 300 Kosraeans had survived the Western imports of smallpox, measles, influenza, and sexually transmitted diseases.

James Neel, a geneticist at the University of Michigan Medical School who died last year, hypothesized in a 1962 article on diabetes that under conditions of scarcity natural selection weeds out people unable to store food efficiently in their bodies, and that a “thrifty genotype” encourages the conversion of calories into body fat. He suggested that this mechanism was necessary for survival during periods of extreme stress and famine that would otherwise ravage a population. Most populations are assumed to have some variation on this genotype, but it is likely that peoples whose evolution was punctuated by a number of particularly harrowing events developed the most-effective versions. In Kosrae, where weather and disease wiped out 90 percent of the population, this effect must have been profound. The very genes presumed to have protected islanders from their history are now believed to be predisposing them to life-threatening illnesses.

In 1994 Friedman and his team at Rockefeller cloned what is perhaps the ultimate thrifty gene—the obese gene, which in its normal form carries the chemical code for leptin. A hormone discovered by Friedman, leptin plays a critical role in the brain, regulating appetite and fat storage, among other things. Leptin is an extremely potent hormone. People who carry the abnormal form of the obese gene don’t have the genetic makeup to produce leptin; they eat uncontrollably and are morbidly obese. Although very few people have this defect, all of us have variations along the leptin and perhaps other brain pathways that influence our eating habits and efficiency at turning calories into body fat. Friedman’s group examined blood samples taken from 2,286 adult Kosraeans in the course of Auerbach’s islandwide screening. Preliminary findings suggest that European genes inherited from New England whalers and other visitors protect Kosraeans to some degree against obesity and diabetes: the more “European” an islander, it appears, the less likely he or she is to be obese or diabetic. Zimmet says this finding is consistent with earlier findings linking Asian genes with those of populations from Native Americans to New Guinea highlanders. Scien-

tists speculate that certain aspects of the Asian genotype, evolved in part to withstand long periods of scarcity, predispose hundreds of millions if not billions of people to obesity and diabetes.

Writing in *Nature* in 1992, Jared Diamond, a professor of physiology at the UCLA Medical School, suggested that the populations of Western industrial nations had already to some extent weeded out the thrifty genotype, keeping diabetes and obesity below the levels now common in Micronesia. "Before modern medicine made [diabetes] more manageable," he wrote, "genetically susceptible Europeans would have been gradually eliminated, bringing [diabetes] to its present [relatively] low frequency." Diamond and others have suggested that some human populations, notably those that evolved in regions of Europe, may have developed a relative resistance to certain noncommunicable diseases just as they did to some infectious diseases—through natural selection over centuries of relatively sustained plenty. Given the burgeoning rates of obesity and diabetes in the United States and other industrialized nations, this seems surprising, until one considers that rates among the most susceptible peoples—Pacific Islanders such as Native Hawaiians, Samoans, and Nauruans—are higher still. Indeed, all measures indicate that the greatest impact of obesity-related disorders will continue to be in newly industrialized and developing nations in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Indian and Pacific Oceans which historically had an unstable food supply.

The World Health Organization recently described overeating as the "fastest growing form of malnourishment" in the world. For the first time in history the number of people worldwide who are both overweight and malnourished, estimated at 1.1 billion, equals the number who are underweight and malnourished. Obesity rates in China have quadrupled in the past decade, and obesity in the urban middle class in India is epidemic. In Colombia 41 percent of adults are overweight. The global spread of diet-linked disease presents one of the greatest medical challenges of the twenty-first century.

But when I spoke with agricultural and business leaders in Micronesia, it was clear that a concerted government effort to fight noncommunicable disease was not likely on these islands. I heard repeatedly that health was a matter of willpower and individual effort, and that government could do nothing to curb the public taste for imports. The fact that many state legislators in Micronesia are also food importers was never mentioned—nor were

the particulars of auto importation in a tiny country already overrun with cars.

Father Francis Hezel, a Jesuit priest from Buffalo, New York, who has spent more than three decades teaching and writing in Micronesia, said that even people in power are reluctant to speak out. "You can enter any clinic and smell the decaying limbs, rotted by diabetes," he told me. "But many people here are beholden to the government. They don't want to rock the boat." In Micronesia—as in much of the world, particularly the developing world—it is more profitable for authorities to encourage overconsumption than to discourage it. The Worldwatch Institute reported last year that approximately four of the five McDonald's restaurants that opened every day in 1997 were outside the United States. In its 1998 annual report the Coca-Cola Company described Africa as "a land of opportunity."

Obesity, diabetes, and other manifestations of New World syndrome can, like infectious diseases, be contained. In Singapore the nationwide Trim and Fit Scheme, which began in 1992, has cut childhood obesity by up to 50 percent. And in Hawaii, Terry Shintani and colleagues at

the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center have shown long-term health benefits from a program emphasizing a return to traditional local foods.

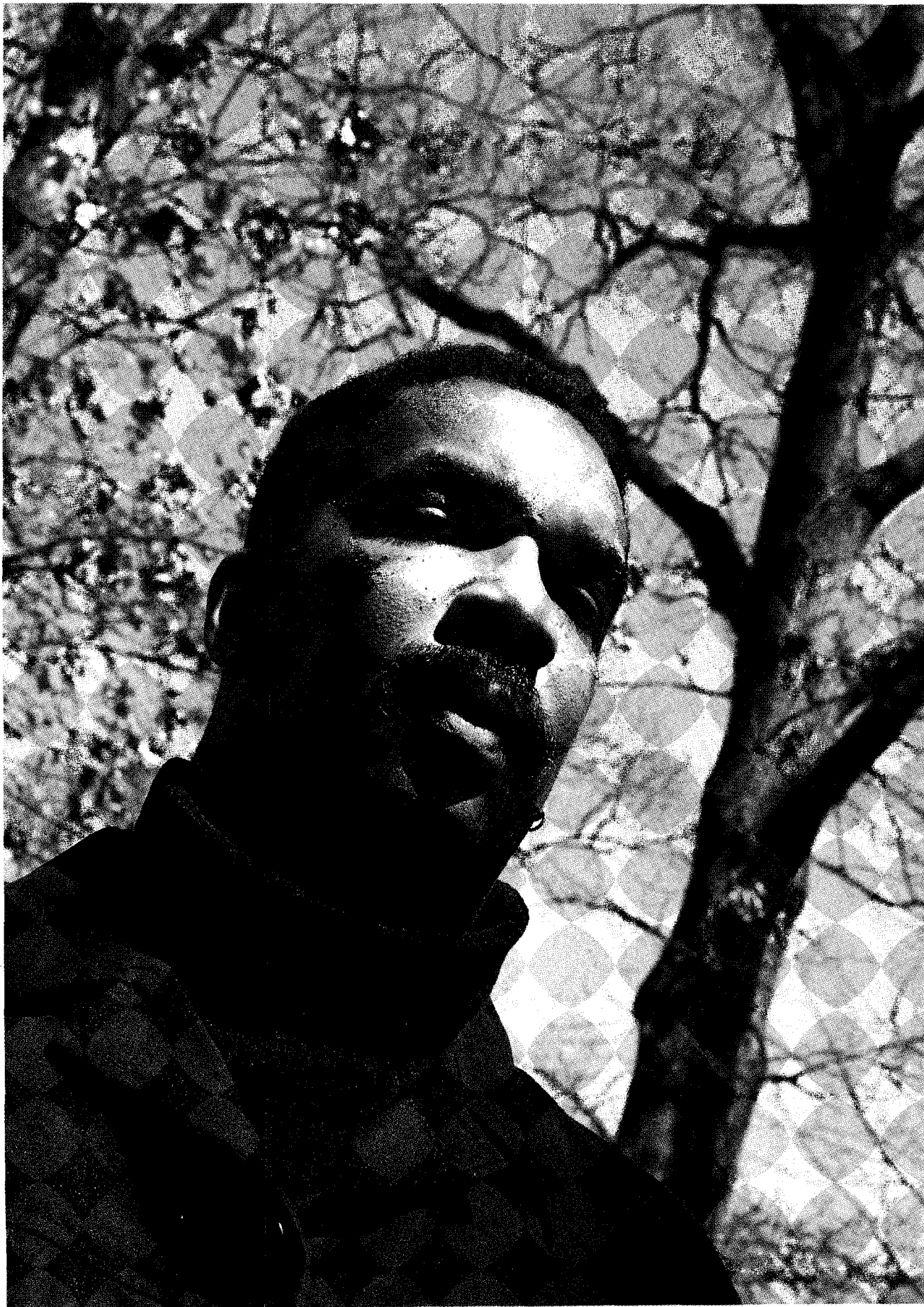
We spotted a glimmer of progress in Micronesia, though not in the Western-style wellness programs.

A Micronesian doctor half joked that even health-care professionals are at risk. "Look at me," he said, pointing to his paunch. "I am myself obese."

One of our hosts, a hospital administrator, told us that he neither farmed nor fished but did enjoy playing basketball, and that he would sometimes jog rather than drive to the high school gym to play. As a result of this regimen he had lost a significant amount of weight, and avoided some of the health problems suffered by his more sedentary compatriots. Basketball, he said, was catching on quickly in Kosrae, as was baseball. "Imports made us sick," he said. "Now maybe imports will help us get well."

However nice the thought, increasing amounts of junk food are being shipped into Kosrae from the West, food importers say, and the island is about to import television programming. Kosraeans will be able to come home, open a few cans of Spam, switch on the tube, and kick back for the evening. It is then that they will truly be able to live—and die—in the manner of their Western benefactors.

It is likely that billions of human beings are genetically primed to get fat—and sick—when exposed to the Western lifestyle. Exportation of this lifestyle is an inevitable consequence of globalism, but its health risks need not be. Curbing the international obesity epidemic is as tough a problem as any now facing public-health officials. But given the lessons of Kosrae, it is worth taking very seriously. ■



GIVING "THE DEVIL" HIS DUE

For several years in the early 1990s U.S. intelligence maintained close ties with a Haitian named Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, the founder of a savage paramilitary group that has been held responsible for a prolonged wave of killings and other atrocities. Toto Constant today walks the streets of Queens, a free man. How did he come to find refuge in the United States? Who has been holding up his deportation?

BY DAVID GRANN

Portrait photographs by Patrick Witty

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NO one remembers who first saw him in the neighborhood, but one day last summer Emile Maceus was nearly certain that Emmanuel "Toto" Constant—the man everyone called "the devil"—was standing on his front stoop. The man was six-foot-three, maybe more; he wore a coat and tie, and his hair—a tightly curled Afro—was neatly combed. He had come, he said, to show a client Maceus's house, a three-bedroom in Queen's Village, New York. He was a real-estate agent, he said, and had seen the pink FOR SALE sign on the front lawn.

Maceus stared at him. The man's face was pudgier than Maceus remembered from Haiti, during the military regime of the early 1990s. Back then he had been bone-thin and ghost-like, sometimes appearing with an Uzi or with a .357 Magnum tucked under his shirt. To help keep the junta in control he had terrorized the population with his paramilitary squad—a legendary outfit of armed civilians who, together with the Haitian military, allegedly tortured, raped, and murdered thousands of people. "Can we look around?" the man asked.

Maceus wasn't sure what to do. Maybe it wasn't Constant. He was bigger than Maceus recalled, more genial, and before Maceus knew it, the man was walking through his house, poking his head into each room, looking at the floorboards and the toilets, taking note of the overhead space in the kitchen, and commenting in Creole. In the living room the man passed a poster on the wall of Jean-Bertrand Aristide—the once and future Haitian president, and the paramilitaries' archenemy—but didn't give it a second look. Maybe he was just a real-estate agent after all, just another Haitian immigrant trying to survive in New York.

But as the real-estate agent was leaving, Maceus kept thinking, What if he *is* Toto Constant? Maceus knew that

in 1994, after the United States overthrew the military regime, Constant, a fugitive from Haitian justice, had been allowed, inexplicably, to slip into the country. Maceus had heard that after Constant had finally been arrested and ordered deported, he had in 1996 mysteriously been released under a secret agreement with the U.S. government—even though the Haitian government had formally requested his extradition and U.S. authorities had found photos of his group's victims, their bodies mutilated, pasted to the walls of his Port-au-Prince headquarters like trophies. As the man was opening the front door, Maceus's curiosity overcame him. He asked in Creole, "What's your family name?"

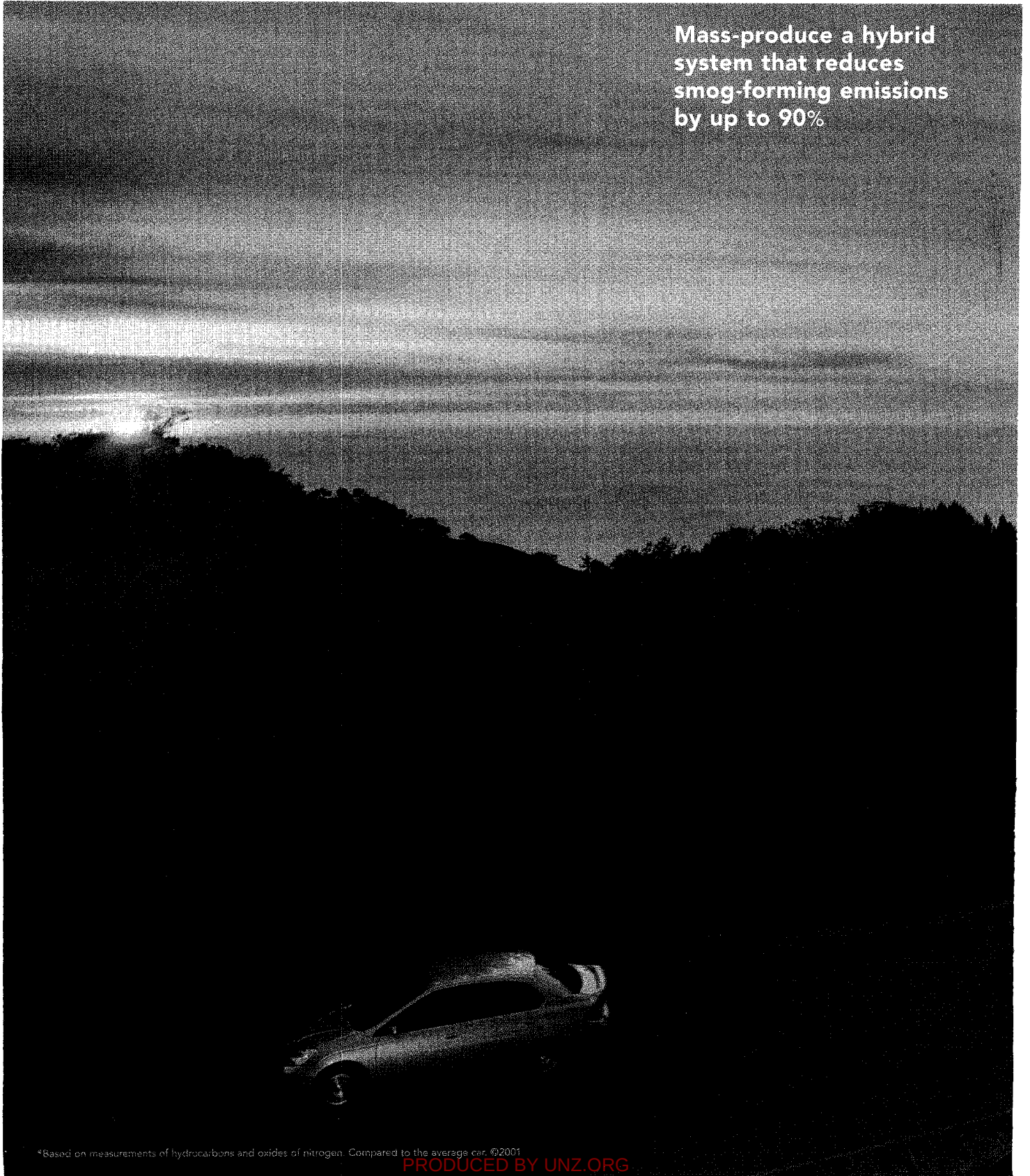
The man hesitated. "Constant."

It *was* Toto Constant. For an instant the two Haitians stood there, staring at each other. Then Constant and his client sped off in a car. Maceus went inside and found his wife. She was trembling. "How could you bring that devil in my house?" she shouted. "*How could you?*"

News of the encounter spread through the city's sprawling Haitian community, from Flatbush to Laurelton to Cambria Heights to Brooklyn, as it would have in Haiti—by *teledjòl*, word of mouth. Constant had ventured out into the community several times since the U.S. government had set him free, but never with such audacity—selling houses to the same people he had driven into exile. When he first arrived in Queens, he seemed to emerge only periodically. He was spotted, someone said, at a disco, clad in black, dancing on the day of Baron Samedi, the voodoo lord of death who guards cemetery gates in his top hat and tails. He was seen at a butcher shop and at a Blockbuster. Haitian-community radio and local newspapers reported the sightings—"HAITI'S GRIM REAPER PARTYING IN U.S.," announced

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one headline—but he always managed to vanish before anyone could locate him. Finally, in 1997, the rumors led to a quiet street in Laurelton, Queens, near the heart of the Haitian community, where for years exiles had hoped to shed the weight of their history—a history of never-ending coups and countercoups—and where Constant could be seen sitting on the porch of the white-stucco house he shared with his aunt and mother. “The whole idea of Toto Constant living free in New York, the bastion of the Haitian diaspora, is an insult to all the Haitian people,” Ricot Dupuy, the manager of Radio Soleil d’Haïti, in Flatbush, told his listeners after Constant moved in.

It was not long before residents draped the street’s trees and lampposts with pictures of Constant’s alleged victims, their hands and feet bound with white cord or their limbs severed by machetes. Neighbors shoved one of the most horrifying pictures—a photo of a young boy lying in a pool of blood—under Constant’s door. But a few days later Constant was back on his porch. Locals came by and spat at his bushes; they stoned his door. Then, last summer, after Constant’s appearance at the Maceus house, an angry crowd appeared around his home, yelling “Murderer!” and “Assassin!” At one point, as they were gathering, someone spotted a figure down the road—a well-known ally of Constant’s, “a spy,” as one person cried out—and the crowd chased after him. When he disappeared and there was still no sight of Constant, the crowd marched to the real-estate office, four miles away, where it threatened to drive the Haitian owner out of business unless he fired his new employee.

By last November, Haitians had created permanent Toto Watches—networks that tracked Constant’s every whereabouts. At about this time I met Ray Laforest, one of the Toto Watchers, and he agreed to show me where “the devil” could be found. He told me to meet him at Binnette’s Hair Palace, on Linden Boulevard, next to the real-estate office in front of which Constant had been seen smoking on his lunch break, and we would look for him.

The barbershop was in the center of Cambria Heights, across the street from a Haitian restaurant and next to a Haitian grocer. It was a small, cramped space, with a TV in the corner. Customers sat in old chrome seats with their heads tilted back, while barbers in white smocks trimmed their hair. As I waited for Laforest, one of the barbers, a young man with a gold chain around his neck, looked at me suspiciously. I explained that I was doing a story on Toto Constant. He said that Constant was a “vampire,” someone who sucked the life out of people.

An older barber, who had been working at his chair on the opposite side of the room, walked over to a closet and pulled out a shovel. It was long, with a thick metal handle, and in a bit of showmanship he lifted it in the air like a club. “This is what they do to the devil people” like Toto, he said, banging it against the floor.

A few minutes later Laforest walked in. He was a large man, with a beard and sunglasses. He carried with him several Wanted posters of Constant, one of which he unfurled, revealing an old black-and-white photograph of the reputed death-squad leader. A moustache curled down around the corners of his mouth, and several crooked teeth showed between his lips. In bold letters the poster said WANTED: EMMANUEL “TOTO” CONSTANT FOR CRIMES AGAINST THE HAITIAN PEOPLE.

As we walked outside, Laforest told me that Constant had disappeared since the protest. “He’s gone into hiding again,” he said. We got in his car and drove through the neighborhood, past a series of elegant Tudor houses, until we arrived at the house where Constant had last been seen. “Why are you stopping?” I asked.

“I’m numb,” he said. “If I saw him right now, I’d tie him up myself.” He told me that Constant’s men and other paramilitaries had dragged one of his friends from a church and shot him in broad daylight, and that earlier his own brother had been tortured by the Haitian military. We waited for several minutes, parked behind a bush. “*Bay kou bliye, pote mak sonje*,” Laforest said.

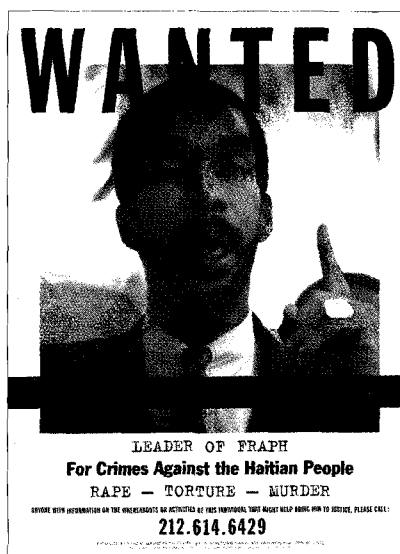
“What does that mean?” I asked.

“It’s an old Creole proverb,” he said. “Those who give the blows forget, those who bear the scars remember.”

LETTING TOTO SPEAK FOR TOTO

I had been looking for Constant ever since I heard that a man facing charges in Haiti for crimes against humanity was living among the very people against whom the crimes were said to have been committed. Unlike Cain, who was cast out of his community, Constant had become an exile in a community of exiles, banished among those whom he had banished. Though he had fled justice, he could not fully escape his past. He had to face it nearly every day—in a glance from a neighbor, or a poster on the street.

More important, he was now, for the first time, confronted with the prospect of real justice. Last fall the Haitian government put him on trial in absentia for the murder of at least six people in the town of Raboteau in April of 1994. Dozens of others were also on trial. It was a historic case—the first major attempt by the Haitian government to prosecute Haitians (or anyone else) for the brutal crimes



committed by the military regime and to test its judicial system, which had been corrupt for so long that it was essentially nonexistent. As a result there was growing pressure on the U.S. government, from home and abroad, to extradite him, and Constant, once intoxicated by press attention, gave fewer and fewer interviews. Since the protest outside his house he had apparently vanished.

When I reached his lawyer, J. D. Larosiliere, last October, he told me that things were at their most critical juncture. A barrel-chested Haitian-American who speaks a combination of formal English and street slang and has a penchant for finely tailored suits, Larosiliere told me he was often referred to as “the Haitian version of Johnnie Cochran.” Denying that there had even been a massacre at Raboteau, he said that if Constant were sent back to Haiti, he would never receive a fair trial and would likely be assassinated. Because of the desperateness of the situation, Larosiliere agreed to let Constant talk to me at length about his current predicament and the allegations against him. “All we want to do is get his side of the story out,” Larosiliere said.

So, one afternoon several days later I headed to Larosiliere’s office, in Newark, New Jersey. When I arrived, Constant and Larosiliere were in a closed-door meeting, and I waited outside in the foyer. I could hear the sound of Creole punctured by occasional bursts of English. A moment later the door swung open, and a large man in a double-breasted suit hurried out. It took me a moment to recognize Constant—he looked at least thirty pounds heavier than in the pictures I’d seen of him taken during the military regime. He still had the same moustache, but on his heavier face it no longer looked so menacing. He wore a turtleneck under his jacket and, to my surprise, a gold earring in his left ear. “Hey, how you doing?” he said, speaking with only a slight accent.

I had expected many things, but not this: he looked like an average American. We sat down in a small conference room lined with books. He leaned forward and then back, and I took out my tape recorder and laid it on the table. Finally he said, “It’s time for Toto to speak for Toto.”

It was the first of more than a dozen interviews. As he told me his story over the next several months, he often spoke for hours on end. He turned over his voluminous notes and private papers, his correspondence and journals. During that time I also interviewed his alleged victims, along with human-rights workers, United Nations observers, Haitian authorities, former and current U.S. officials within the White House, the State Department, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the intelligence community, many of whom had never before spoken publicly about Constant. I also gained access to intelligence reports, some of which had previously been classified, and State Department cables. With these and other sources I was finally able to piece together not only the story of Emmanuel “Toto” Constant but also much of the story of

how the United States government secretly aided him and later shielded him from justice.

VOODOO PARAMILITARY

In October of 1993 the USS *Harlan County*, loaded with military personnel, was sent steaming toward Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince. President Bill Clinton had dispatched the ship and its crew as the first major contingent of an international peacekeeping mission to restore to power Haiti’s first democratically elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Aristide was a political priest, a wiry, passionate, bug-eyed orator who had risen to power in late 1990 on a mixture of socialism and liberation theology. The down-trodden of Haiti, which is nearly everyone, called him “Titid” and revered him; the military and the economic elite reviled him as an unstable radical. He was deposed in a coup less than a year after taking office and ultimately fled to the United States. Since then the military, along with roaming bands of paramilitaries, had murdered scores of people. The bloodshed had galvanized the international community, and the ship’s arrival was hailed as a turning point in the effort to restore both some semblance of public safety and the island’s democracy.

On October 11, as the *Harlan County* neared port, a group of UN and U.S. officials, headed by the chargé d’affaires, Vicki Huddleston, and accompanied by a large press corps, came to formally welcome the ship and its troops. The assembly waited at the entrance to the port for a guard to open the gate, but nothing happened. Documentary footage shows Huddleston sitting in the back of her car with the CIA station chief. Speaking to another embassy official, she says into her walkie-talkie, “Tell the captain [of the port] I am here to speak with him.”

“Roger, ma’am. We have passed that repeatedly to him, and we are getting nowhere.”

“Well, tell him I’m here at the gate and I’m waiting for the authorities to open it.”

“He doesn’t want to talk right now ... He ran away.”

“Open the gate.”

“We’re having some problem with hostile staff. We may have a situation.”

Indeed, at that moment a band of armed men, under the direction of the then little-known thirty-six-year-old paramilitary leader Toto Constant, stormed the area. The men, who had already blocked the dock where the *Harlan County* was supposed to tie up, surrounded Huddleston’s car, banging on the hood and yelling in English, “Kill whites! Kill whites!”

There were only about a hundred in all, many of them pot-bellied and out of shape; although some carried guns, many wielded sticks and pitchforks. But the show of force, just a few days after U.S. soldiers had been killed in Somalia, proved terrifying. Constant put on a savvy performance for the press cameras: his ragtag troops banged on sheepskin

drums and shouted “Somalia” as if it were a battle cry. They drank and caroused through the night, turning their vehicles’ lights toward the open sea where the *Harlan County* was still waiting. Finally President Clinton ordered the ship to leave. It was one of the most humiliating retreats in U.S. naval history, and a surprising one even to those who forced it. “My people kept wanting to run away,” Constant told reporters afterward. “But I took the gamble and urged them to stay. Then the Americans pulled out! We were astonished.”

That day was the coming-out party for Constant and his Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti, better known as FRAPH, which in Creole evokes the word “*frapper*,” meaning “to hit.” (Constant said the name had come to him in a dream.) Organized by Constant several months earlier, FRAPH was described by its leader as a grassroots political organization—“a mysterious event”—that would rise from the masses and replace the remnants of Aristide’s populist movement. The party literature, which Constant



The USS Harlan County off the coast of Haiti, 1993

composed on an old manual typewriter and handed out to the press, explained that “FRAPH is a popular movement of unity, where all the social sectors are firmly intertwined to bring perfect harmony to the Haitian people.”

But FRAPH was a peculiar sort of political party: although it offered free food and liquor to lure supporters, most of its thousands of followers were drawn from the armed bands that operated at the military’s behest and from former members of the now defunct Tonton Macoutes, the infamous paramilitary organization named for a child-snatching bogeyman in Haitian fairy tales. At rallies FRAPH members demonstrated mass salutes that seemed designed to evoke fear: at Constant’s cue his followers would raise their left hands over their heads and slam their right fists into them, or raise their right hands in the air, palms forward, in Nazi fashion. And although FRAPH’s literature spoke of unity, Constant declared publicly, “If Aristide were to return, he would die. Aristide and his supporters are the enemies of this country.”

In this setting Constant tried to cultivate an image as the only gentleman in a band of thugs. At the official launching of FRAPH, as his men surrounded him with guns, he released a handful of doves. Rather than don a soft hat and sunglasses, or camouflage pants, like other paramilitaries, he often appeared in a neat blue suit and tie. He sometimes carried a bamboo cane in his right hand, which he leaned on as he walked. He was well suited for the part of the gentleman. He had been raised within Haiti’s tiny aristocracy, and had studied at Canadian universities and worked briefly in New York as a Haitian diplomat. He spoke English with only a slight accent, and translated for the press in Spanish, French, and, of course, Creole. “Never forget that I am from the establishment,” he liked to say. “I am not just any Joe out there. I’m *Constant*.”

Still, there was something frightening about him. His eyes, set deep in his head, were glassy and jittery. U.S. officials and reporters said that he was wired on cocaine (Constant has always denied this), and he was known to stay up all night, driving wildly through the streets, his bodyguards hanging out the back of the car with their machine guns. In public he usually appeared with a man named Jojo, a fierce former Macoute who claimed that his pregnant wife had been murdered by Aristide’s supporters and who was regarded as a merciless killer. “He is not afraid of anything,” Constant still says of Jojo respectfully.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1993, with Jojo as his partner, Constant began a campaign to set up FRAPH offices in every town and village. Members received special ID cards and, apparently with the military’s approval, machine guns. Like the old Macoutes, they operated as part local bosses, part spies, part extortionists, part militia, and part political cadre. But at their core they were an extension of the military’s might, a brutal “force multiplier,” as one U.S. intelligence report put it, which would allow the regime the deniability that a prudent government always looks for in the use of murder. “FRAPH’s will is an order,” Constant declared shortly after the storming of the port. “When we ask for something, the entire country has to accept it.”

“FACIAL SCALPING”

More and more packs of armed men began to roam at night, looking for Aristide supporters. They were believed to be FRAPH, the police, or the military, or a combination of all three, but they were usually careful to disguise themselves with hoods or women’s clothing (a trademark of the old Macoutes). They carried tire irons, M-16s, Uzis, pistols, machetes, axes, and “voodoo powders,” which were widely believed to be lethal. They broke into homes and seized their political enemies. “I realized that I was among animals,” an Aristide supporter who was taken prisoner by one of these armed packs told human-rights monitors. “At first they played with me, taking out their guns and saying I would die. Then they took me to a little torture

SHEPARD SHERRELL/SABA

chamber where there was a small bed ... They started beating me about the buttocks with their truncheons, one after the other. At that moment I thought I would die. I passed out. When I came to, I was in a cell with another man. There were rivers of blood on the floor. Some of it was mine."

"The scenario is always substantially the same," the OAS/UN International Civilian Mission reported in 1994, after an extensive investigation. "Armed men, often military or FRAPH members, burst into the house of a political activist they [sought] to capture." If he wasn't there, the report said, the intruders attacked his wife or sister or daughter. "One guy took me by the hands and led me to the front porch," a woman told Human Rights Watch. "He said lie down. He said, 'If you don't I'll split your head open' ... He pulled his pants down to his knees, lifted up my nightgown, pulled down my underpants, and raped me."

Faceless bodies began to appear in the streets. The assailants had developed a kind of art known as "facial scalping," a bloody ritual in which a person's face was peeled from ear to ear with a machete. It was a way to torture people even in the afterlife, because, many believed, such mutilation would prevent a proper burial—trapping the spirit eternally in purgatory.

As the bodies piled up, Constant held forth. He would often sit in a rattan chair in the courtyard of the house that had been his father's, a sprawling Art Deco mansion with a swimming pool and fountains, and speak to the press. Unlike other paramilitary leaders, who purposely remained in the shadows, Constant craved coverage. He let reporters sleep in his garden. He cut back the hedges to make more space for them and handed out T-shirts emblazoned with FRAPH's name. "I had one-on-ones with the greatest reporters in the world," he recalls today. "All of them. I've met all of them. At one point I was the most interviewed person in the world. I was one of the most important. I had Japanese journalists at my place. It was incredible." Constant enjoyed playing the role of statesman. He warned the United States not to intervene and threatened to shut down the country in protest of the world embargo put into place after the coup. He called for the dissolution of Haiti's parliament, echoing Jojo, who had earlier warned that if it didn't disband, FRAPH would call on the people to "tie up the deputies." "What I say comes from my heart," Constant would say. Or "A leader has to know how to play with the army, the power, and the people."

As he cultivated the press, Constant also courted Haiti's *houngans*, or voodoo priests, a potent psychological force. He portrayed himself as an embodiment of the most-fierce spirits. He held public ceremonies in front of the markets or at temples, where his men laid out small skulls. At a typical ceremony he would lie on the ground, surrounded by skulls and fire. Then, as he rose from the flames, the crowd would chant in Creole, "Toto for President! Without Toto, Haiti can't have a life." Though he still carried

a .357 Magnum, he insisted that he no longer needed it. "I have the power of voodoo with me," he said.

GENERAL CONSTANT'S BOY

In Haiti nearly every leader has a hidden history, a family closet usually filled with the bones of enemies. Constant inherited the secrets, and to some degree the power, of his father. Gerard Emmanuel Constant had been the army chief of staff under Haiti's dictator François "Papa Doc" Duvalier during the 1960s, a loyal soldier who once famously rose from his bed in the middle of the night to execute, along with other officers, more than a dozen of his friends at the dictator's command. He remained a symbol of the old ruling order after it had collapsed.

But shortly after the military coup, in September of 1991, as his disciples emerged from the barracks to restore the old Duvalier system, the seventy-two-year-old general slipped into a coma and died. All the military leaders and former Duvalier supporters turned out for the old general's



Emmanuel "Toto" Constant at a FRAPH rally, 1994

funeral. "It was a real phenomenon," Constant says. "I was inheriting all my father's protection and power and people. It was a symbolic transference." In his private papers Constant went even further: "My prominence, some might argue, is destiny ... To be the first son of General Gerard Emmanuel Constant is the call to arms for Emmanuel Gerard Constant, myself."

It was not long before people feared the younger Constant even more than they had feared his father. By the middle of 1994 thousands of Haitians had been slaughtered or had disappeared, and although no one knew for sure how many had been killed by FRAPH itself (most human-rights observers had by then been driven out of the country), the group was universally considered the most brutal of all the right-wing paramilitary outfits. Witnesses, many of them found floating on rafts as they tried to escape to the United States, told international authorities that Constant's men, in an effort to wipe out opposition, were annihilating the population. Even FRAPH members started to flee in disgust.

"When they kill and rape people, we [new members] are forced to sit and watch," a former recruit told U.S. authorities, according to a declassified document obtained by the Center for Constitutional Rights for use in a lawsuit against FRAPH. Later, as part of their initiation, this same man said, the recruits were made to join the assaults.

Though Constant continued to deny the allegations, the UN concluded by 1994 that Constant's organization was "the only political movement [in Haiti] whose members have been linked to assassinations and rapes." In the spring of 1994 a secret cable from the office of the American military attaché in Port-au-Prince warned, "All over the country, FRAPH is evolving into a sort of Mafia." Its members were "gun-carrying crazies," one cable stated, eager to "use violence against all who oppose it."

According to witnesses, when a FRAPH member turned up dead in Cité Soleil, a sprawling slum in Port-au-Prince, in December of 1993, Constant's men descended within hours. Carrying machine guns and machetes, they torched



One of the daily victims, Port-au-Prince, 1994

a thousand houses in revenge, killing more than a dozen people. Here is an excerpt from the account by Human Rights Watch/Americas-NCHR:

They entered the neighborhood, looked for specific persons and shot them on sight, doused the precarious one-room shacks with gasoline, set them alight, and fired their weapons into the air as the flames spread ... During the fire, known FRAPH members beat and arrested several people under the eyes of the military ... The Justice and Peace Commission reported that fire-fighters were turned back by armed men ... [who] nailed doors shut, imprisoning people in their homes.

Constant, as usual, denied FRAPH's involvement. As he later pointed out, "If I was going to really react, there would be no more Cité."

Though there were reports that he was on the scene during the fire and at other times had participated personally in torture sessions, Constant was careful to avoid serious implication. But the more Constant appeared on

television to deny any connection with crimes, the more he seemed the face of them. By the autumn of 1994 he was no longer merely the head of FRAPH; he had become, in the eyes of most Haitians, the embodiment of the regime: the voodoo lord of death, Baron Samedi, himself.

A MYSTERIOUS ESCAPE

In July of 1992 Brian Latell, the leading CIA analyst for Latin America, visited Haiti to gather intelligence as policymakers in Washington tried to assess military rule in Haiti. Afterward, in a report later obtained by the press, he wrote, "I do not wish to minimize the role the military plays in intimidating and occasionally terrorizing real and suspected opponents, but my experiences confirm the [intelligence] community's view that there is no systematic or frequent lethal violence aimed at civilians."

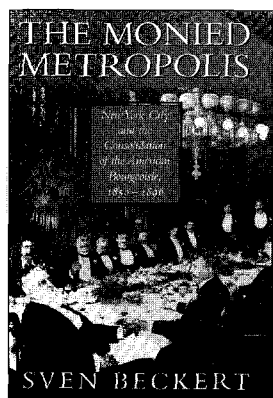
Playing down the bloodshed (Latell called the head of the junta, Lieutenant General Raoul Cedras, "a conscientious military leader"), the report directly conflicted with those coming from human-rights organizations, the press, and even the State Department. But along with subsequent CIA reports, it contributed to the ongoing vacillation in Washington. Whereas President Bill Clinton was pushing to restore the exiled Aristide to power, many in the CIA, along with elements in the Pentagon, feared that Aristide was a dangerous populist. In fact, Aristide was a problematic figure for the United States (he had once suggested necklacing his enemies with burning tires). But a crucial CIA report, which was circulated on Capitol Hill just after the *Harlan County* incident, seemed to grossly exaggerate his instability, claiming that he was so unbalanced psychologically that he had once had to be hospitalized. The charge later proved to be false, but at the time, it fueled American opposition to an invasion. "There were factions in the process who didn't want to get involved in Haiti and could use these intelligence reports to strengthen their position," one former Clinton Administration official says.

But the evidence of "systematic" and "frequent lethal violence aimed at civilians" was overwhelming. And finally, in September of 1994, three years after the coup and almost a year after the *Harlan County*'s retreat, President Clinton ordered a full-scale invasion to end what he called the "reign of terror." "We now know that there have been ... over three thousand political murders," he said. In preparation for battle Constant changed FRAPH's name to the Armed Revolutionary Front of the Haitian People and, according to news accounts, stockpiled weapons and "secret" powders that, he declared, would be able to "contaminate water so that the GIs will die." He claimed to have one powder ground from the bones of AIDS victims. Appearing in camouflage pants and a black T-shirt, a machine gun at his side, he no longer gave any hint of the diplomat. "Each FRAPH man," Constant said, "must put down one American soldier."

But faced with the might of the United States, the junta

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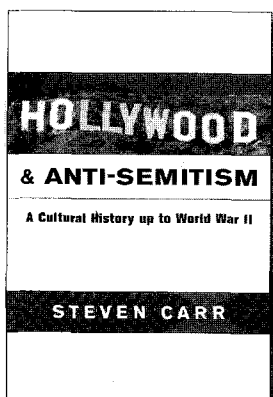
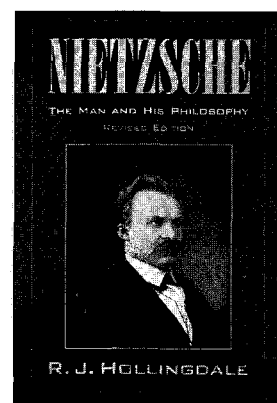
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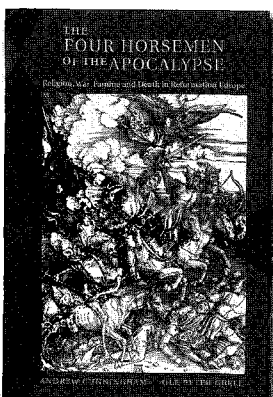
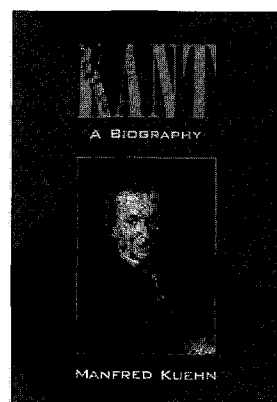
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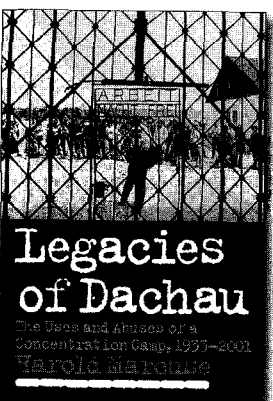
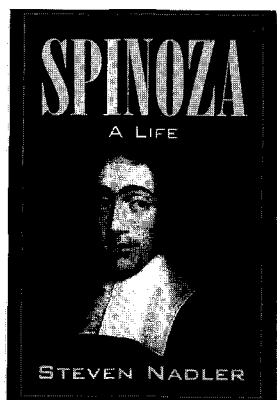
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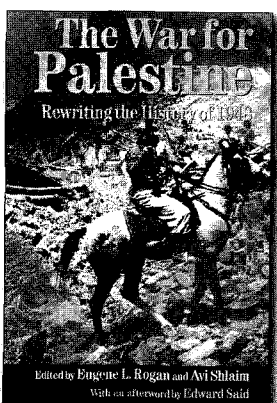
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A "TELL ALL" AUTOBIOGRAPHY

"My conscience is clear," Constant told me last October as I met with him in his lawyer's office. When I pressed him about FRAPH murders and rapes, he said that there was no evidence implicating him and that he could not be held accountable for every member of such a sprawling operation. "If somebody the day of the vote killed another individual in the street of New York, and they found he just voted Democrat, they're not going to make Clinton responsible," he said.

He leaned back in his chair, as if trying to think of his next point, and then, as if it had just dawned on him, he pulled out a piece of paper and began to scribble on it. Trying to illuminate the logic of the military regime, he drew a circle in the center and wrote the word "army" inside it. Then he drew two circles orbiting around the first—one marked "the people" and the other "FRAPH." "In Haiti our democratic instrument has always been the army since 1804," he said, pointing to the first circle. "When the people are fed up with the government, it is the army which represents that same populace that overthrows the government. The army is the extension of the people." He said all this without a hint of insincerity. Indeed, he seemed happy to be telling his side of the story, and at the conclusion of this first interview he invited me to his house in Queens, where he was living, as he put it, "like a hostage."

Part of a long row of nearly identical English Tudors in Laurelton, the house looked on the outside like a dump: the façade, once white, was weather-stained, the front steps needed paint, and the storm window overlooking the porch was shattered. Haitians had told me, among other things, that Constant kept the bones of his victims in his room, practiced late-night voodoo rituals, stored CIA arms in the basement, and shot trespassers. Some people were afraid to walk past the front yard, and one neighborhood kid told me that his friends dared one another to sneak up on the porch and look in the window at night, where they could see "the devil" sitting by himself.

As I hesitated on the stoop, the front door suddenly opened and Constant appeared, holding a cigarette. "Come on in," he said. I followed him into the living room, which was musty and dimly lit, the walls covered with Haitian art, the couches and chairs draped in plastic. Constant sat across from me in a rocker, swaying back and forth as he smoked. He handed me several piles of documents that, he said, established his innocence, including FRAPH speeches, cables between the U.S. embassy in Port-au-Prince and the State Department, and a letter Constant had written to President Clinton. "There's a lot more," he said, "but I've lost a lot of things since I came here."

As I started to ask him questions about his past, he took a tape recorder from his pocket and said that he was working on a book about his life. "I'm in the midst of writing," he said. "I went to take a class about self-publishing your book,

and one of the things the guy told me was if you're talking about your past, then record yourself." I thought perhaps he just wanted to make sure I quoted him correctly, but a moment later he showed me a book proposal: "This proposal offers a 'hot' new 'tell all' expose on Emmanuel 'TOTO' Constant code name 'CAMAL,' and FRAPH ... The market analysis suggests that with at least 2 million Haitians in the U.S. and at least 50,000 others in the U.S. who have interest in Haiti ... this book could easily sell over 1 million copies." The proposal promised that the book, tentatively titled *Echoes of Silence*, would serve as a treatise on what Constant called the "poli-military organization." He had even drawn up a dummy book jacket that said,

Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, notorious leader of FRAPH ... and alleged murderer, rapist, and terrorist thug, breaks the yoke of silence. Speaking from his heart, he exposes the real man behind the villainous images. Interesting, provocative, informative and sensitive, *Echoes of Silence* candidly portrays the complexities of life in Haiti, where nothing is simple. It might lead one to conclude: The political frenzy in Haiti, as addictive and dangerous as any narcotic, keeps the masses alive mentally and emotionally even while it kills.

This was Constant's latest attempt to earn a living. Since his release from prison, as I would learn during our talks, he had tried all sorts of ways to set himself up. He had taken computer classes. He had sold used cars. But each time he had found an opportunity, the other Haitian immigrants in the community had risen up and driven him from his job. "I'm a prisoner," he said. And then, "The worst time is when they came in front of the real-estate office ... because I really had a good situation."

Since that day, last August, he had become what he called an "investment consultant," which mostly meant selling and renting properties as covertly as he could. Whenever I was with him, his cell phone rang. Usually he slipped into Creole, but occasionally he'd say things like "I can show you the place tomorrow. No problem. Heat included. Okay. *Au revoir*."

He told me he was concentrating on credit reports, because a lot of Haitians were unfamiliar with them. "I need to establish some kind of income here," he said.

Once I listened to him raise and lower his voice like an auctioneer: "*Hello. Oui. Oui* ... I saw the apartment ... They were asking one thousand, one hundred dollars, and I'll bring it down to a *thousand* ... Everything is included ... Okay? ... It's Cambria Heights, very nice neighborhood, very quiet, very, very safe ... I'm working very hard for you."

His wife called one day, from Canada, where she had gone with their four children out of fear for their safety. "My wife is leaving me," he said when he hung up, lighting another cigarette. "We're having discussions about the kids. I wanted them to come the way they used to, and she doesn't want them to. So we're having an argument, but everything will be okay."



After a while his phone rang again, and I asked if I could look around the place. “No problem,” he said. I headed upstairs, past several cracked walls and closed doors. Constant’s room was on the third floor. It was small and cluttered with videos and men’s fashion magazines. By his bed was a framed picture of him from his appearance on *60 Minutes*. In one corner was a small shrine. Candles and figurines of Catholic saints, which often play a role in voodoo, were arranged in a neat circle. As I bent down to inspect them, Constant called out my name. One of the statues was the patron saint of justice; on its base was inscribed, “Be ever mindful of this great favor and I will never cease to honor thee as my special and powerful patron.” Constant called my name again, and I hurried downstairs. “Let’s go out,” he said, putting on a leather jacket.

The Haitian community in New York, as in Haiti, is segregated, largely according to class. The poorest Haitians are in Brooklyn, and those of greater wealth and status have fanned out into more-affluent settlements like Laurelton and Cambria Heights. As we walked through Laurelton, I could smell roasting *griot*, or pork. The sound of *compas*, Haitian dance music, blared from grocery stores. We passed several men smoking in the cold, chatting in Creole. “I need some meat,” Constant said, heading toward a butcher shop. The store was packed, and we could barely fit inside. A

small circle of Haitians were playing cards in the back. As Constant pressed up against the counter, I realized that everyone was staring at him. “I need some goat,” he said, breaking the sudden silence. He pointed at some enormous hind legs hanging from a meat hook. He glanced at the back, where several people seemed to be saying something about him, but he appeared unfazed. The butcher began to cut through the bone and gristle of a goat leg. His thick arm pushed down, slicing in clean strokes. “Everybody here knows who I am,” Constant said on the way out. “Everybody. They’ve all read about me or seen my picture.” He darted across the street to a barbershop. A CLOSED sign hung on the door, but he could see the barber inside, and Constant banged on the window, pleading with him to take one more customer. “There’s another barber-shop down the street,” he told me, “but if I went there they’d slit my ...” His voice trailed off as he drew his fingers across his throat and let out a strange laugh.

A COURTHOUSE IN HAITI

The trial was more than a thousand miles away from New York. On September 29 of last year a Haitian court began trying Constant on charges of murder, attempted murder, and being an accomplice to murder and torture—charging him, in effect, with the Raboteau mas-

sacre. I went there with J. D. Larosiliere in October, as the trial was reaching its climax. Twenty-two people—mostly soldiers and FRAPH paramilitaries—were being prosecuted in person. Constant and the leaders of the junta were being tried in absentia.

As the last U.S. troops prepared to pull out, the country was, as ever, a shambles. Although the Clinton Administration's policies had stemmed the bloodshed, success in "nationbuilding" was elusive. Eighty percent of the people were unemployed, and two thirds were malnourished. Gangs still roamed the streets. Drug-running planes took off and landed with impunity. Even the heralded new democratic system was believed to be rife with fraud. Aristide, after having put his protégé René Préval in power, was running for the presidency again amid allegations that he was trying to pack the parliament with his supporters. Political thugery and assassination, this time from both the right and the left, were beginning to occur again. "Now everyone knows I was right," Constant told me later. "Everyone has seen what has happened under Aristide."

The trial itself was a potential flash point for violence. The U.S. embassy warned Americans to stay away from the area for fear of "large scale demonstrations, tire burnings, rock throwing and worse." As our plane landed, Larosiliere told me

The courthouse was in the center of the city, surrounded by tractor-trailers—a makeshift barricade to prevent mobs from rushing in. We entered a small, squat building, where armed guards searched us for weapons; the attaché told me he had left his gun behind, but he stayed close to Larosiliere's side. We passed through one room and then another; finally, to my surprise, we headed into an open courtyard, where the trial was being held under a billowing white canopy. The judge sat at a table, wearing a black robe and a tall hat with a white band. He had a bell in place of a gavel. To one side of him, sitting in neat rows, were the prosecution and the jury; to the other side were the defense and the twenty-two accused, behind a cordon of armed guards. Larosiliere joined the defense, and the attaché and I sat at the end opposite the judge, with the scores of observers and alleged victims.

I had barely sat down when a lawyer for the prosecution began to scream at Larosiliere, jabbing his hand in the air and demanding that Larosiliere tell the court who he was and why he was there. The attaché, who had been at my side, was on his feet before Larosiliere answered. The crowd filled with murmurs: "*Toto Constant! Toto Constant!*" People looked around as if Constant might be under the canopy. The lawyer began to bark again at Larosiliere; the attaché now

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT TOTO WAS A PAID INFORMANT. A FORMER HIGH-RANKING INTELLIGENCE OFFICIAL OBSERVED THAT CONSTANT WAS "ONE OF A WHOLE RANGE OF PEOPLE WE HAD RELATIONSHIPS WITH, ALL WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ADMINISTRATION."

that he had been warned about potential assassination attempts. "If they attack me, it will only help me prove my case," he said. "If I'm not safe, then how can my client be safe?"

At the airport we met a large man with mirrored sunglasses and a military bearing, who would serve as Larosiliere's "attaché." "You cannot depend on the police to have security," the attaché told me. "So you need to be armed to protect yourself." The attaché pushed our way through a crowd of taxi drivers, bag handlers, beggars, and pickpockets. I smelled flesh and sweat and food, and as we rushed to the car, I tried to deflect the arms outstretched to help me with my things. "Welcome to Haiti," Larosiliere said.

The city of Gonaïves, where the courthouse was located, is only seventy miles from Port-au-Prince, but it took us half a day to get there. Nearly all the roads in Haiti are unpaved. The Americans started to build a paved road after the invasion, but they gave up and the road now ends abruptly on the edge of a slum. We rumbled past Aristide's new estate on the outskirts of the capital, where he increasingly secludes himself; past the old Club Med, abandoned since 1999, along with almost all the other tourist sites; past irrigated plains where peasants rolled up their pant legs to wade through fields of rice. Then we headed north, past arid, desolate land where nothing seemed to grow but cacti, until we came upon Gonaïves.

stood by Larosiliere's side, his arms crossed on his chest.

Most of the alleged victims had already testified that on April 22, 1994, soldiers and FRAPH members had descended on the village of Raboteau, known for its staunch support of Aristide. They described being driven from their homes, forced into open sewers, robbed, and tortured. In past attacks the villagers had fled to the sea, where their fishing boats were tied up. But when they did so this time, they said, the attackers were waiting for them in boats and opened fire. "In order to escape ... I took to the sea," one of the villagers, Henri-Claude Elisme, had said in a sworn deposition. "I climbed aboard my boat; I saw Claude Jean ... fall under the soldiers' bullets." Abdel Saint Louis, a thirty-two-year-old sailor, said, "I fled ... into a boat. At sea I saw another boat arrive. Thinking they were people trying to escape, I came closer to them. I then saw Youfou, a FRAPH member, piloting a group of soldiers. They fired in my direction. I called for help. They arrested me, beat me, and forced me to guide the boat. Seeing other people in a boat, the soldiers fired in their direction and hit two girls: Rosiane and Deborah."

By the end of the assault, according to the prosecution witnesses, dozens of people were wounded and at least six were dead; the prosecution estimated that the actual toll was

much higher. Most of the bodies had allegedly been buried in shallow graves along the sea and either eaten by animals or washed away. "When I went down to the shore I saw [my brother's] boat covered in blood," Celony Seraphin testified. "I only found him on April 28 ... tied up with Charité Cadet; both had been murdered. I was not authorized to remove the body ... I demand justice for my brother."

The testimony occasionally elicited angry shouts from the spectators, and the judge would ring his bell, trying to quiet the courtyard. That afternoon Karen Burns, a forensic anthropologist from the United States, was sworn in. A Canadian expert on DNA was scheduled to follow her. It would be the first time that forensic evidence and genetic evidence were introduced in a Haitian court, and the courtyard fell silent. Burns stood in the center of the gathering, surrounded by the skeletal remains of three people, excavated from the edge of the sea in Raboteau in 1995. As she spoke, spectators and jurors craned their necks to look at the bones. Burns held up one and said, "This is the pelvis right here." She put it down and picked up another bone. "This individual was found with a rope tied around his neck, and this is the rope that was retrieved." As she held up the rope, there were several gasps.

Larosiliere—who, like his client, maintains that the massacre was fabricated as propaganda to discredit FRAPH and the military regime—remained unimpressed. "I live for testimony like this," he told me that night, drinking a glass of rum, as we sat with the attaché at the hotel restaurant. "It's bullshit. Come on! [This wouldn't be allowed] in an American courtroom with the federal rules of evidence! She did a scientific study on a site with no integrity. Everyone and everybody walked around it. Come on. You know I can go to graveyards and pick up skeletons from anybody and put them down."

Refilling his glass, Larosiliere said that the prosecution's entire case was preposterous. If there had been any organized military involvement at all, he said, no evidence would have been left on the beach. "Those bodies would be put on a truck, and they'd be taken out on the Rue Nationale—"

"You got it," the attaché agreed.

"—or the highway—"

"At night," the attaché added.

"—and dumped into—"

"The Source Puante," the attaché said.

"Sulfur ditches," Larosiliere explained. "The best place, because the sulfur eats the body."

As he spoke, several international human-rights observers sat down next to us. They stared at Larosiliere, whom they recognized from the courtroom. His voice seemed to grow louder as he noticed them. Finally one of them began to argue with him about Constant. "If for one instant, sir, I believed that Haiti could sustain a true trial for my client, I'd be the first one to throw him on the plane," Larosiliere said.

Later I asked Brian Concannon, an American human-

rights lawyer who had spent most of the previous five years in Haiti spearheading the trial, if he thought Larosiliere's concern about the fairness of the tribunal was legitimate. Concannon said he thought it was not. He told me that the judicial system, which had received more than \$25 million in American aid for reform, had slowly and steadily evolved in recent years. The judge and one of the prosecutors, for instance, had gone through a training program funded in part by the United States; another prosecutor had gone to France, where he studied at a judicial academy. Concannon said that although it had taken years to accomplish, the trial was extraordinarily fair by any standard. Indeed, he said, it had become a kind of prototype for the judicial system in Haiti. Perhaps most important, despite fears by Constant that he would be killed, not a single defendant so far had been harmed in prison or in a courtroom. "The defendants were given the benefit of all their rights under Haitian law and under international treaties to which Haiti is a party," Concannon said. "They were allowed to present witnesses, alibis, and exculpatory evidence."

As for Constant, Concannon said, the case was based on the same legal precedent used to prosecute Nazi leaders after World War II and, more recently, war criminals in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. "Constant started an organization that was specifically designed to [carry out]—and in fact carried out—massive violations of human rights," he said. "Constant then provided that organization with training, money, and weapons. He has liability as a commander. It was the same with Nuremberg. He was in charge of a criminal organization and is responsible for the crimes of that organization." Though there was no evidence that Constant had been on the scene at Raboteau, Concannon said, there was indisputable evidence that FRAPH members participated in the attack and systematically terrorized the community. And, he said, there was probably more evidence against Constant in the thousands of pages of secret documents confiscated by U.S. soldiers in their 1994 raid on FRAPH headquarters, documents the Clinton Administration had so far refused to return to Haiti—fueling allegations that Washington was trying to conceal its ties to FRAPH and Constant.

On the second day of our visit Larosiliere decided to stage a protest. In the middle of the proceedings he rose from his chair and stood stiffly in the courtroom. The trial came to a halt, and everyone stared at him. Then he marched out the door, the attaché a few feet behind him. There was an angry chorus of murmurs. A prosecution lawyer denounced the move as merely a ruse, a sign that Constant's lawyer had intended from the outset not to use the tribunal for justice but only to discredit it. ("My understanding of an adequate murder defense is that you spend more than a few hours at the trial," Concannon told me. "We've worked on this case full-time for four and a half years.") After Larosiliere left, I sat for a while and stared at the dozens of alleged victims sitting on the back benches. Many of them had bought

suits for the trial. The young women, some of whom had been shot, wore white dresses that somehow stayed pristine in the dusty heat; they sat with their backs perfectly straight. On several occasions these people had walked miles to the capital to pressure their government for justice. They had written songs about what had happened. And they sat there now, as rain began to fall, and as a clerk collected the bones strewn on the table, and as rumors filled the country that another coup attempt had been thwarted in the capital. As I finally rose to go, a young man who had seen me arrive with Constant's lawyer stopped me; before I could say anything, he spat at my shoe and walked away.

THE VERDICT

"They tried to get me to come out to beat me up," Constant told me shortly after I returned. He was eating a piece of chocolate cake in a Queens diner. Tensions in the community had intensified since the beginning of the trial. Larosiliere had told him to leave the house during such demonstrations, to avoid confrontations. But Constant always remained nearby. "I have to protect my mother and aunt in case one of them go crazy," he told me. Ricot Dupuy, of Radio Soleil d'Haiti, told me candidly, "There are Haitian groups who have toyed with the idea of

but not least, a "spook," an "S.O.B." and a "double spy" have been a source of wonderment about why I have been so suddenly accused in the media.

As I was reading, the phone rang in the kitchen. Constant went to it, and I could hear him speaking in Creole. A moment later he walked back into the room. "You're here for a part of history," he said. "The verdict came out. I've been sentenced to life imprisonment and to hard labor, and they're taking over all my property in Haiti."

He dropped into his rocking chair, looking around the room. He lit a cigarette and rocked back and forth. Apparently the jury had deliberated for four hours and had found sixteen of the twenty-two defendants in custody guilty, twelve of them for premeditated murder or being accomplices to murder. All those in absentia were convicted of murder and ordered to pay the victims millions of dollars in damages. "I hate to lose my things back home," Constant said, "because eventually my mother has to go back there." He lit another cigarette and pulled on it deeply. "I better call J.D.," he said, referring to Larosiliere. He picked up his cell phone, trying to concentrate. "They have a verdict against me," he said into the phone, leaving a message for his lawyer. "I need to speak to him. Okay? They have sentenced me to life and hard labor!"

IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES TOLD ME IT WAS "IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE" AND "TOTALLY BOGUS" THAT CONSTANT COULD HAVE ENTERED THE UNITED STATES ON A VALID VISA WITHOUT EITHER HELP FROM SOMEONE IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT OR FORGED DOCUMENTS.

taking the law into their own hands and killing him." Constant claims he has a small coterie of supporters who keep an eye out for him. "I can tell you, when they come in front of my place, fifty percent of the people out there are my people," he said. "They pass by in case there is any trouble."

Though it is hard to know the precise numbers, Constant maintains some hold over a small following of former FRAPH members, Tonton Macoutes, soldiers, and Duvalierists who also live in exile. Demonstrators say that in at least one instance a car showed up outside his house to monitor them. "They came by taking pictures of us, and we took pictures of them," Ray Laforest told me.

"I don't want to play a deadly game," Constant said of Laforest, "but I have stuff on him, and ..." He let his thought trail off.

One day I was sitting with Constant in his house, reading a copy of his book manuscript. Someone had helped him write the first few chapters.

My media image, both internationally and in the U.S., has been a source of anguish for me. Topics that suggest my alleged involvement with the CIA, being a human rights abuser, operating "voodoo politics," being a bogeyman, making Haiti "a place of fear," being a "tough guy," a "gunman," "dog," an "attaché," and, last

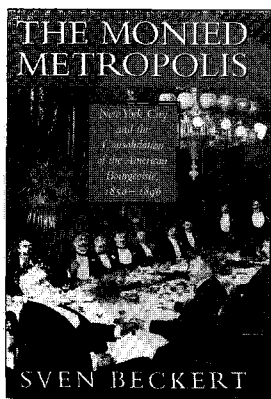
A few minutes later the phone rang, and Constant picked it up in a hurry. But it was a reporter asking him for a comment. He stumbled through something and hung up. The phone rang again. It was Larosiliere. "What do you think's going to happen here?" Constant asked nervously. "Okay ... yes ... okay."

He handed me the phone. I could hear Larosiliere's voice crackling through the receiver before I put it to my ear. "I have one word to say about all this: bullshit," Larosiliere said that the Haitian government would now try to extradite Constant, claiming that a legitimate tribunal had convicted him with the blessing of international observers. But, he said, they still had to show that the verdict was fair and prove in a U.S. court that Constant deserved to be sent back. It is important to point out that under Haitian law, if Constant surrenders or is arrested, he will have the right to a new trial.

Constant called me a few days later. His voice was agitated. "There are all these rumors out there that they're about to arrest me," he said, "that they're coming for me." He said he had to check in with the INS the following day, as he did every Tuesday, but he was afraid the authorities might be planning to seize him this time. "Can you meet me there?"

By the time I arrived at the INS office in Manhattan the next morning, he was already standing by the entrance. It

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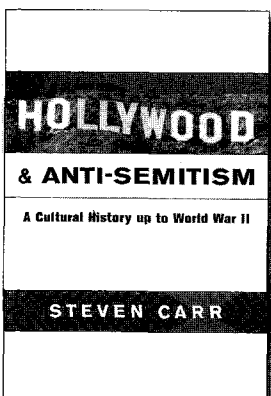
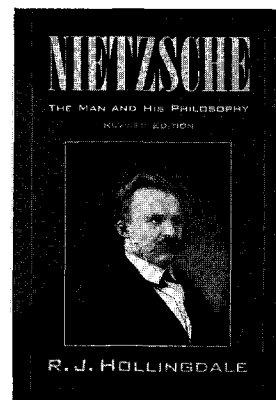
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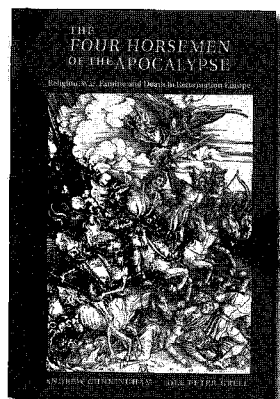
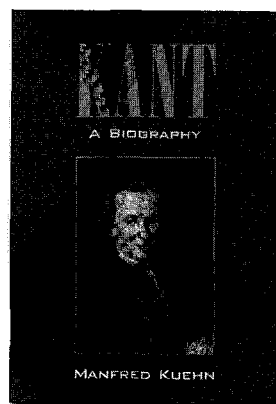
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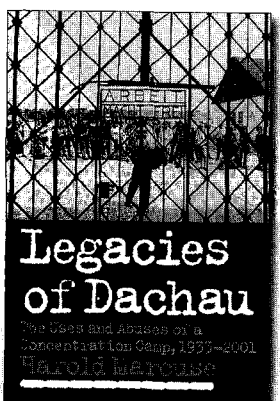
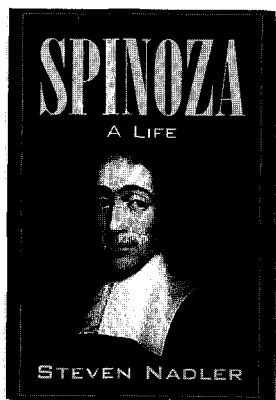
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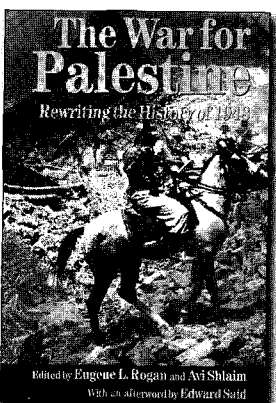
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A "TELL ALL" AUTOBIOGRAPHY

"My conscience is clear," Constant told me last October as I met with him in his lawyer's office. When I pressed him about FRAPH murders and rapes, he said that there was no evidence implicating him and that he could not be held accountable for every member of such a sprawling operation. "If somebody the day of the vote killed another individual in the street of New York, and they found he just voted Democrat, they're not going to make Clinton responsible," he said.

He leaned back in his chair, as if trying to think of his next point, and then, as if it had just dawned on him, he pulled out a piece of paper and began to scribble on it. Trying to illuminate the logic of the military regime, he drew a circle in the center and wrote the word "army" inside it. Then he drew two circles orbiting around the first—one marked "the people" and the other "FRAPH." "In Haiti our democratic instrument has always been the army since 1804," he said, pointing to the first circle. "When the people are fed up with the government, it is the army which represents that same populace that overthrows the government. The army is the extension of the people." He said all this without a hint of insincerity. Indeed, he seemed happy to be telling his side of the story, and at the conclusion of this first interview he invited me to his house in Queens, where he was living, as he put it, "like a hostage."

Part of a long row of nearly identical English Tudors in Laurelton, the house looked on the outside like a dump: the façade, once white, was weather-stained, the front steps needed paint, and the storm window overlooking the porch was shattered. Haitians had told me, among other things, that Constant kept the bones of his victims in his room, practiced late-night voodoo rituals, stored CIA arms in the basement, and shot trespassers. Some people were afraid to walk past the front yard, and one neighborhood kid told me that his friends dared one another to sneak up on the porch and look in the window at night, where they could see "the devil" sitting by himself.

As I hesitated on the stoop, the front door suddenly opened and Constant appeared, holding a cigarette. "Come on in," he said. I followed him into the living room, which was musty and dimly lit, the walls covered with Haitian art, the couches and chairs draped in plastic. Constant sat across from me in a rocker, swaying back and forth as he smoked. He handed me several piles of documents that, he said, established his innocence, including FRAPH speeches, cables between the U.S. embassy in Port-au-Prince and the State Department, and a letter Constant had written to President Clinton. "There's a lot more," he said, "but I've lost a lot of things since I came here."

As I started to ask him questions about his past, he took a tape recorder from his pocket and said that he was working on a book about his life. "I'm in the midst of writing," he said. "I went to take a class about self-publishing your book,

and one of the things the guy told me was if you're talking about your past, then record yourself." I thought perhaps he just wanted to make sure I quoted him correctly, but a moment later he showed me a book proposal: "This proposal offers a 'hot' new 'tell all' expose on Emmanuel 'TOTO' Constant code name 'GAMAL,' and FRAPH ... The market analysis suggests that with at least 2 million Haitians in the U.S. and at least 50,000 others in the U.S. who have interest in Haiti ... this book could easily sell over 1 million copies." The proposal promised that the book, tentatively titled *Echoes of Silence*, would serve as a treatise on what Constant called the "poli-military organization." He had even drawn up a dummy book jacket that said,

Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, notorious leader of FRAPH ... and alleged murderer, rapist, and terrorist thug, breaks the yoke of silence. Speaking from his heart, he exposes the real man behind the villainous images. Interesting, provocative, informative and sensitive, *Echoes of Silence* candidly portrays the complexities of life in Haiti, where nothing is simple. It might lead one to conclude: The political frenzy in Haiti, as addictive and dangerous as any narcotic, keeps the masses alive mentally and emotionally even while it kills.

This was Constant's latest attempt to earn a living. Since his release from prison, as I would learn during our talks, he had tried all sorts of ways to set himself up. He had taken computer classes. He had sold used cars. But each time he had found an opportunity, the other Haitian immigrants in the community had risen up and driven him from his job. "I'm a prisoner," he said. And then, "The worst time is when they came in front of the real-estate office ... because I really had a good situation."

Since that day, last August, he had become what he called an "investment consultant," which mostly meant selling and renting properties as covertly as he could. Whenever I was with him, his cell phone rang. Usually he slipped into Creole, but occasionally he'd say things like "I can show you the place tomorrow. No problem. Heat included. Okay. *Au revoir*."

He told me he was concentrating on credit reports, because a lot of Haitians were unfamiliar with them. "I need to establish some kind of income here," he said.

Once I listened to him raise and lower his voice like an auctioneer: "*Hello. Oui. Oui* ... I saw the apartment ... They were asking one thousand, one hundred dollars, and I'll bring it down to a *thousand* ... Everything is included ... Okay? ... It's Cambria Heights, very nice neighborhood, very quiet, very, very safe ... I'm working very hard for you."

His wife called one day, from Canada, where she had gone with their four children out of fear for their safety. "My wife is leaving me," he said when he hung up, lighting another cigarette. "We're having discussions about the kids. I wanted them to come the way they used to, and she doesn't want them to. So we're having an argument, but everything will be okay."



After a while his phone rang again, and I asked if I could look around the place. “No problem,” he said. I headed upstairs, past several cracked walls and closed doors. Constant’s room was on the third floor. It was small and cluttered with videos and men’s fashion magazines. By his bed was a framed picture of him from his appearance on *60 Minutes*. In one corner was a small shrine. Candles and figurines of Catholic saints, which often play a role in voodoo, were arranged in a neat circle. As I bent down to inspect them, Constant called out my name. One of the statues was the patron saint of justice; on its base was inscribed, “Be ever mindful of this great favor and I will never cease to honor thee as my special and powerful patron.” Constant called my name again, and I hurried downstairs. “Let’s go out,” he said, putting on a leather jacket.

The Haitian community in New York, as in Haiti, is segregated, largely according to class. The poorest Haitians are in Brooklyn, and those of greater wealth and status have fanned out into more-affluent settlements like Laurelton and Cambria Heights. As we walked through Laurelton, I could smell roasting *griot*, or pork. The sound of *compas*, Haitian dance music, blared from grocery stores. We passed several men smoking in the cold, chatting in Creole. “I need some meat,” Constant said, heading toward a butcher shop. The store was packed, and we could barely fit inside. A

small circle of Haitians were playing cards in the back. As Constant pressed up against the counter, I realized that everyone was staring at him. “I need some goat,” he said, breaking the sudden silence. He pointed at some enormous hind legs hanging from a meat hook. He glanced at the back, where several people seemed to be saying something about him, but he appeared unfazed. The butcher began to cut through the bone and gristle of a goat leg. His thick arm pushed down, slicing in clean strokes. “Everybody here knows who I am,” Constant said on the way out. “Everybody. They’ve all read about me or seen my picture.” He darted across the street to a barbershop. A CLOSED sign hung on the door, but he could see the barber inside, and Constant banged on the window, pleading with him to take one more customer. “There’s another barbershop down the street,” he told me, “but if I went there they’d slit my ...” His voice trailed off as he drew his fingers across his throat and let out a strange laugh.

A COURTHOUSE IN HAITI

The trial was more than a thousand miles away from New York. On September 29 of last year a Haitian court began trying Constant on charges of murder, attempted murder, and being an accomplice to murder and torture—charging him, in effect, with the Raboteau mas-

sacre. I went there with J. D. Larosiliere in October, as the trial was reaching its climax. Twenty-two people—mostly soldiers and FRAPH paramilitaries—were being prosecuted in person. Constant and the leaders of the junta were being tried in absentia.

As the last U.S. troops prepared to pull out, the country was, as ever, a shambles. Although the Clinton Administration's policies had stemmed the bloodshed, success in "nationbuilding" was elusive. Eighty percent of the people were unemployed, and two thirds were malnourished. Gangs still roamed the streets. Drug-running planes took off and landed with impunity. Even the heralded new democratic system was believed to be rife with fraud. Aristide, after having put his protégé René Préval in power, was running for the presidency again amid allegations that he was trying to pack the parliament with his supporters. Political thuggery and assassination, this time from both the right and the left, were beginning to occur again. "Now everyone knows I was right," Constant told me later. "Everyone has seen what has happened under Aristide."

The trial itself was a potential flash point for violence. The U.S. embassy warned Americans to stay away from the area for fear of "large scale demonstrations, tire burnings, rock throwing and worse." As our plane landed, Larosiliere told me

The courthouse was in the center of the city, surrounded by tractor-trailers—a makeshift barricade to prevent mobs from rushing in. We entered a small, squat building, where armed guards searched us for weapons; the attaché told me he had left his gun behind, but he stayed close to Larosiliere's side. We passed through one room and then another; finally, to my surprise, we headed into an open courtyard, where the trial was being held under a billowing white canopy. The judge sat at a table, wearing a black robe and a tall hat with a white band. He had a bell in place of a gavel. To one side of him, sitting in neat rows, were the prosecution and the jury; to the other side were the defense and the twenty-two accused, behind a cordon of armed guards. Larosiliere joined the defense, and the attaché and I sat at the end opposite the judge, with the scores of observers and alleged victims.

I had barely sat down when a lawyer for the prosecution began to scream at Larosiliere, jabbing his hand in the air and demanding that Larosiliere tell the court who he was and why he was there. The attaché, who had been at my side, was on his feet before Larosiliere answered. The crowd filled with murmurs: "*Toto Constant! Toto Constant!*" People looked around as if Constant might be under the canopy. The lawyer began to bark again at Larosiliere; the attaché now

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT TOTO WAS A PAID INFORMANT. A FORMER HIGH-RANKING INTELLIGENCE OFFICIAL OBSERVED THAT CONSTANT WAS "ONE OF A WHOLE RANGE OF PEOPLE WE HAD RELATIONSHIPS WITH, ALL WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ADMINISTRATION."

that he had been warned about potential assassination attempts. "If they attack me, it will only help me prove my case," he said. "If I'm not safe, then how can my client be safe?"

At the airport we met a large man with mirrored sunglasses and a military bearing, who would serve as Larosiliere's "attaché." "You cannot depend on the police to have security," the attaché told me. "So you need to be armed to protect yourself." The attaché pushed our way through a crowd of taxi drivers, bag handlers, beggars, and pickpockets. I smelled flesh and sweat and food, and as we rushed to the car, I tried to deflect the arms outstretched to help me with my things. "Welcome to Haiti," Larosiliere said.

The city of Gonaïves, where the courthouse was located, is only seventy miles from Port-au-Prince, but it took us half a day to get there. Nearly all the roads in Haiti are unpaved. The Americans started to build a paved road after the invasion, but they gave up and the road now ends abruptly on the edge of a slum. We rumbled past Aristide's new estate on the outskirts of the capital, where he increasingly secludes himself; past the old Club Med, abandoned since 1999, along with almost all the other tourist sites; past irrigated plains where peasants rolled up their pant legs to wade through fields of rice. Then we headed north, past arid, desolate land where nothing seemed to grow but cacti, until we came upon Gonaïves.

stood by Larosiliere's side, his arms crossed on his chest.

Most of the alleged victims had already testified that on April 22, 1994, soldiers and FRAPH members had descended on the village of Raboteau, known for its staunch support of Aristide. They described being driven from their homes, forced into open sewers, robbed, and tortured. In past attacks the villagers had fled to the sea, where their fishing boats were tied up. But when they did so this time, they said, the attackers were waiting for them in boats and opened fire. "In order to escape ... I took to the sea," one of the villagers, Henri-Claude Elisme, had said in a sworn deposition. "I climbed aboard my boat; I saw Claude Jean ... fall under the soldiers' bullets." Abdel Saint Louis, a thirty-two-year-old sailor, said, "I fled ... into a boat. At sea I saw another boat arrive. Thinking they were people trying to escape, I came closer to them. I then saw Youfou, a FRAPH member, piloting a group of soldiers. They fired in my direction. I called for help. They arrested me, beat me, and forced me to guide the boat. Seeing other people in a boat, the soldiers fired in their direction and hit two girls: Rosiane and Deborah."

By the end of the assault, according to the prosecution witnesses, dozens of people were wounded and at least six were dead; the prosecution estimated that the actual toll was

much higher. Most of the bodies had allegedly been buried in shallow graves along the sea and either eaten by animals or washed away. "When I went down to the shore I saw [my brother's] boat covered in blood," Celony Seraphin testified. "I only found him on April 28 ... tied up with Charité Cadet; both had been murdered. I was not authorized to remove the body ... I demand justice for my brother."

The testimony occasionally elicited angry shouts from the spectators, and the judge would ring his bell, trying to quiet the courtyard. That afternoon Karen Burns, a forensic anthropologist from the United States, was sworn in. A Canadian expert on DNA was scheduled to follow her. It would be the first time that forensic evidence and genetic evidence were introduced in a Haitian court, and the courtyard fell silent. Burns stood in the center of the gathering, surrounded by the skeletal remains of three people, excavated from the edge of the sea in Raboteau in 1995. As she spoke, spectators and jurors craned their necks to look at the bones. Burns held up one and said, "This is the pelvis right here." She put it down and picked up another bone. "This individual was found with a rope tied around his neck, and this is the rope that was retrieved." As she held up the rope, there were several gasps.

Larosiliere—who, like his client, maintains that the massacre was fabricated as propaganda to discredit FRAPH and the military regime—remained unimpressed. "I live for testimony like this," he told me that night, drinking a glass of rum, as we sat with the attaché at the hotel restaurant. "It's bullshit. Come on! [This wouldn't be allowed] in an American courtroom with the federal rules of evidence! She did a scientific study on a site with no integrity. Everyone and everybody walked around it. Come on. You know I can go to graveyards and pick up skeletons from anybody and put them down."

Refilling his glass, Larosiliere said that the prosecution's entire case was preposterous. If there had been any organized military involvement at all, he said, no evidence would have been left on the beach. "Those bodies would be put on a truck, and they'd be taken out on the Rue Nationale—"

"You got it," the attaché agreed.

"—or the highway—"

"At night," the attaché added.

"—and dumped into—"

"The Source Puante," the attaché said.

"Sulfur ditches," Larosiliere explained. "The best place, because the sulfur eats the body."

As he spoke, several international human-rights observers sat down next to us. They stared at Larosiliere, whom they recognized from the courtroom. His voice seemed to grow louder as he noticed them. Finally one of them began to argue with him about Constant. "If for one instant, sir, I believed that Haiti could sustain a true trial for my client, I'd be the first one to throw him on the plane," Larosiliere said.

Later I asked Brian Concannon, an American human-

rights lawyer who had spent most of the previous five years in Haiti spearheading the trial, if he thought Larosiliere's concern about the fairness of the tribunal was legitimate. Concannon said he thought it was not. He told me that the judicial system, which had received more than \$25 million in American aid for reform, had slowly and steadily evolved in recent years. The judge and one of the prosecutors, for instance, had gone through a training program funded in part by the United States; another prosecutor had gone to France, where he studied at a judicial academy. Concannon said that although it had taken years to accomplish, the trial was extraordinarily fair by any standard. Indeed, he said, it had become a kind of prototype for the judicial system in Haiti. Perhaps most important, despite fears by Constant that he would be killed, not a single defendant so far had been harmed in prison or in a courtroom. "The defendants were given the benefit of all their rights under Haitian law and under international treaties to which Haiti is a party," Concannon said. "They were allowed to present witnesses, alibis, and exculpatory evidence."

As for Constant, Concannon said, the case was based on the same legal precedent used to prosecute Nazi leaders after World War II and, more recently, war criminals in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. "Constant started an organization that was specifically designed to [carry out]—and in fact carried out—massive violations of human rights," he said. "Constant then provided that organization with training, money, and weapons. He has liability as a commander. It was the same with Nuremberg. He was in charge of a criminal organization and is responsible for the crimes of that organization." Though there was no evidence that Constant had been on the scene at Raboteau, Concannon said, there was indisputable evidence that FRAPH members participated in the attack and systematically terrorized the community. And, he said, there was probably more evidence against Constant in the thousands of pages of secret documents confiscated by U.S. soldiers in their 1994 raid on FRAPH headquarters, documents the Clinton Administration had so far refused to return to Haiti—fueling allegations that Washington was trying to conceal its ties to FRAPH and Constant.

On the second day of our visit Larosiliere decided to stage a protest. In the middle of the proceedings he rose from his chair and stood stiffly in the courtroom. The trial came to a halt, and everyone stared at him. Then he marched out the door, the attaché a few feet behind him. There was an angry chorus of murmurs. A prosecution lawyer denounced the move as merely a ruse, a sign that Constant's lawyer had intended from the outset not to use the tribunal for justice but only to discredit it. ("My understanding of an adequate murder defense is that you spend more than a few hours at the trial," Concannon told me. "We've worked on this case full-time for four and a half years.") After Larosiliere left, I sat for a while and stared at the dozens of alleged victims sitting on the back benches. Many of them had bought

suits for the trial. The young women, some of whom had been shot, wore white dresses that somehow stayed pristine in the dusty heat; they sat with their backs perfectly straight. On several occasions these people had walked miles to the capital to pressure their government for justice. They had written songs about what had happened. And they sat there now, as rain began to fall, and as a clerk collected the bones strewn on the table, and as rumors filled the country that another coup attempt had been thwarted in the capital. As I finally rose to go, a young man who had seen me arrive with Constant's lawyer stopped me; before I could say anything, he spat at my shoe and walked away.

THE VERDICT

They tried to get me to come out to beat me up," Constant told me shortly after I returned. He was eating a piece of chocolate cake in a Queens diner. Tensions in the community had intensified since the beginning of the trial. Larosiliere had told him to leave the house during such demonstrations, to avoid confrontations. But Constant always remained nearby. "I have to protect my mother and aunt in case one of them go crazy," he told me. Ricot Dupuy, of Radio Soleil d'Haiti, told me candidly, "There are Haitian groups who have toyed with the idea of

but not least, a "spook," an "S.O.B." and a "double spy" have been a source of wonderment about why I have been so suddenly accused in the media.

As I was reading, the phone rang in the kitchen. Constant went to it, and I could hear him speaking in Creole. A moment later he walked back into the room. "You're here for a part of history," he said. "The verdict came out. I've been sentenced to life imprisonment and to hard labor, and they're taking over all my property in Haiti."

He dropped into his rocking chair, looking around the room. He lit a cigarette and rocked back and forth. Apparently the jury had deliberated for four hours and had found sixteen of the twenty-two defendants in custody guilty, twelve of them for premeditated murder or being accomplices to murder. All those in absentia were convicted of murder and ordered to pay the victims millions of dollars in damages. "I hate to lose my things back home," Constant said, "because eventually my mother has to go back there." He lit another cigarette and pulled on it deeply. "I better call J.D.," he said, referring to Larosiliere. He picked up his cell phone, trying to concentrate. "They have a verdict against me," he said into the phone, leaving a message for his lawyer. "I need to speak to him. Okay? They have sentenced me to life and hard labor!"

IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES TOLD ME IT WAS "IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE" AND "TOTALLY BOGUS" THAT CONSTANT COULD HAVE ENTERED THE UNITED STATES ON A VALID VISA WITHOUT EITHER HELP FROM SOMEONE IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT OR FORGED DOCUMENTS.

taking the law into their own hands and killing him." Constant claims he has a small coterie of supporters who keep an eye out for him. "I can tell you, when they come in front of my place, fifty percent of the people out there are my people," he said. "They pass by in case there is any trouble."

Though it is hard to know the precise numbers, Constant maintains some hold over a small following of former FRAPH members, Tonton Macoutes, soldiers, and Duvalierists who also live in exile. Demonstrators say that in at least one instance a car showed up outside his house to monitor them. "They came by taking pictures of us, and we took pictures of them," Ray Laforest told me.

"I don't want to play a deadly game," Constant said of Laforest, "but I have stuff on him, and ..." He let his thought trail off.

One day I was sitting with Constant in his house, reading a copy of his book manuscript. Someone had helped him write the first few chapters.

My media image, both internationally and in the U.S., has been a source of anguish for me. Topics that suggest my alleged involvement with the CIA, being a human rights abuser, operating "voodoo politics," being a bogeyman, making Haiti "a place of fear," being a "tough guy," a "gunman," "dog," an "attaché," and, last

A few minutes later the phone rang, and Constant picked it up in a hurry. But it was a reporter asking him for a comment. He stumbled through something and hung up. The phone rang again. It was Larosiliere. "What do you think's going to happen here?" Constant asked nervously. "Okay ... yes ... okay."

He handed me the phone. I could hear Larosiliere's voice crackling through the receiver before I put it to my ear. "I have one word to say about all this: bullshit," Larosiliere said that the Haitian government would now try to extradite Constant, claiming that a legitimate tribunal had convicted him with the blessing of international observers. But, he said, they still had to show that the verdict was fair and prove in a U.S. court that Constant deserved to be sent back. It is important to point out that under Haitian law, if Constant surrenders or is arrested, he will have the right to a new trial.

Constant called me a few days later. His voice was agitated. "There are all these rumors out there that they're about to arrest me," he said, "that they're coming for me." He said he had to check in with the INS the following day, as he did every Tuesday, but he was afraid the authorities might be planning to seize him this time. "Can you meet me there?"

By the time I arrived at the INS office in Manhattan the next morning, he was already standing by the entrance. It

was cold, and his trench coat was wrapped around him. He told me that his mother, who was in Florida, had called to tell him that other Haitian exiles had been arrested. I could see circles under his eyes. Pacing back and forth, he said that he had stayed at a friend's house the night before, in case the authorities showed up at his house to arrest him.

I followed him into the elevator and up to the twelfth floor. The room was filled with immigrants. Constant tried to check in at the front desk, where a poster of the Statue of Liberty hung, but the woman there said they weren't ready for him yet. He sat down and started to ponder why he had been kept free for so long. "This is what I'm trying to find out and that nobody has been able to analyze it with me. Why are they keeping me alive? I don't know why, in fact. A friend of mine told me one day, he works for intelligence here, and he said there is somebody, somewhere, that is following everything about me, every court paper, every legal action, every immigration matter, and this is the only person that really knows why they are keeping me alive."

A few minutes later someone yelled out his name, and he leaped to his feet. He approached the desk with his INS form and checked in, as always. The woman took the sheet of paper and walked into a back room, where she consulted with somebody. Then the woman returned and, just like that, Constant was smiling, leading me to the elevator, calling his mother to say he was okay, and rushing across the street to buy a new suit in celebration of his freedom.

The next week two dozen Toto Watchers gathered outside the INS carrying signs that showed alleged FRAPH victims: a murdered boy with a shirt pulled over his head; two men lying in a pool of blood. "We are here to demand that Toto Constant be sent back to Haiti to stand trial for crimes against the Haitian people," Kim Ives, a writer for the Brooklyn-based newspaper *Haiti Progrès*, yelled through a bullhorn. "If you're opposed to war criminals and to death-squad leaders living as your neighbors in New York City, please join us." Human-rights activists began to join the protesters. There was a sense that this was the last chance to persuade the U.S. government to send Constant back to Haiti—that if it wouldn't do so now, after the conviction, it never would. A UN expert on Haiti, Adama Dieng, who had served as an impartial observer at the trial, had already called the verdict "a landmark in [the] fight against impunity," and in one of the last moves of the Clinton Administration, according to two U.S. officials, the documents confiscated during the raid on FRAPH headquarters had been sent back to Haiti. So far the files have not been made public, but they may contain more evidence of FRAPH's crimes and could add to the case for Constant's extradition. Still, most activists remain skeptical. Brian Concannon told me after the trial, "The presence of such a horrible killer in the U.S. shows that the U.S. supports those activities. There is, unfortunately, no other credible explanation."

Outside the INS office several in the crowd were bent

over, trying to light candles in the freezing wind. "How can they not send him back?" a Haitian man asked me. "He has been found guilty by a Haitian court. Why is the CIA protecting him?" Suddenly there was a loud, unified chant from the crowd: "Toto Constant, you can't hide! We charge you with genocide!"

AU REVOIR?

At one of our last meetings, after Jean-Bertrand Aristide and George W. Bush had each been sworn in to their respective offices, Constant called and said he had to see me. His legal status remained unchanged. He had been talking to his "advisers," he said, and he needed to tell me something. The political terrain had shifted in both countries, he said. There was more and more resistance to Aristide, even in Queens. Bombs had recently exploded in Port-au-Prince, and the regime had blamed Constant. He denied any role, but he said that Haitians from all over were calling, waiting for him to act, to step up.

At the Haitian restaurant where we met, he told me that people had "been publishing articles, and they say, 'Look at this guy who has been convicted for murder in Haiti and he's getting stronger and stronger every day.'" He sipped a glass of rum. "A lot of people in Haiti are watching me. They haven't heard from me. They don't know what's going to happen, but everyone has their eyes on me, and people are sending me their phone numbers from Haiti. People here try to reach me. Political leaders are trying to reach me. There is a perception that if ... Aristide is on the go, I'm the only one that can step in. I can't let that thing get to my head. I have to be very careful and analyze it and make it work for me."

As people entered the restaurant, Constant looked over his shoulder to check them out. He waited for two Haitian men to sit down, and then he turned back to me and said that he had to do something dramatic or he would be a hostage in Queens for the rest of his life. "If I stand up and make a press conference, and even if I don't say anything but I just attack Aristide, that's going to give strength to the opposition down there, that's going to give strength to the former military, that's going to give strength to the former FRAPH members, that's going to give strength to everyone who didn't have the guts because they didn't see who would take the lead." He had recently received a new spate of death threats, he said. Someone had gotten hold of his cell-phone number and had warned, "I'm going to get you no matter what you do." I asked if he was afraid of what might happen if he so brazenly broke his gag order and called a press conference. He said that he wasn't sure what would happen, but it was his destiny. "I've been prepared since young for a mission, and that's why I've stayed alive," he said. He glanced over his shoulder again, and then he leaned toward me. "I'm either going to be President of Haiti," he said, "or I'm going to be killed." ▀

THREE-WHEELER

A short story

BY BOBBIE ANN MASON

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Checking the dirt-streaked window, Mary saw the little boys slipping around through the woods again. They were sneaking from tree to tree, hiding. Today they had their rifles with them.

She let her pottery wheel die and stomped outside. The boys were brothers, and they lived two houses down the road. Their small white house appeared to be barricaded, with its hedge of oil drums and chicken crates.

"What are you boys up to now?" she said, rubbing her clayey hands with an old dish towel. They beamed at her with calculated innocence.

"Do you need us to kill you some snakes?" Jeb, the older one, asked, fixing her with a sly Humphrey Bogart gaze. He was about ten.

"No. What do you want to kill my snakes for?"

"They might get in your clubhouse," the smaller one said. His name was Abe. He was freckled like an old blue-enameled dishpan.

"You've got a neat clubhouse," Jeb said, tossing his head.

He was talking about her pottery studio, the little shed tacked on to a storage barn. She spent all her time there, throwing pots. She didn't have time for little boys or anything else considered normal around here—cooking, TV, church. She was sure these boys had picked all her daffodils the week before.

"Do you need us to kill you any groundhogs?" Jeb said.

"I haven't seen any groundhogs."

"It's a dollar-fifty for a groundhog, ten dollars for a snake," the younger one said.

Jeb shifted his rifle. He said, "Abe specializes in snakes. I'm after foxes, but ain't many of them. And the coyotes are whomping all the groundhogs."

"I don't need you little boys around here," Mary said, hiking her coveralls up.

"Don't you have *anything* that needs killing?" Abe said.

"We can help you do stuff," Jeb said.

"I don't need your help," Mary said. She motioned toward the "clubhouse." "Don't let me catch you messing around *there*."

Pointing their rifles ahead, they disappeared behind the

barn, where they encountered a padlocked door. "What's in there?" Jeb asked when she reached the boys.

"That's where my ovens are," Mary said with a dangerous grin. "My ovens are so hot they would melt those guns of yours. Now, don't let me catch you fooling around here, or I'll shut you in my ovens."

"We ain't scared," Jeb said.

"Don't you know what happened to Hansel and Gretel?" she asked.

Their blank faces said no.

"That's pathetic," she said. "Don't your parents teach you anything?"

She was certain these boys had killed the birds she kept finding scattered throughout the woods. Earlier in the month she had found a pile of songbirds beside a tree. The shattered birds looked as though they had gathered for a songfest and sung themselves to death.

The next day, from the kitchen window, she saw the boys sneaking out from behind the barn. Yanking along a small wagon, they skidded into a mound of dirt she had recently had delivered and began digging. She had gotten the dirt to fill in a place where an old outhouse site was sinking, but it had been dumped ten yards away from the hole. A latticework of roots covered the depression in the ground.

Again she rushed out to face the boys. "What are you doing?" she barked. "Quit messing in my dirt." She paused to collect herself, but then blurted anyway, "I know what you boys did to my flowers. You're thieves and vandals."

She pointed to the picked patch, a few yards away. She imagined the daffodils still nodding their heads, as if in a reflex action.

"We want to work," Jeb said. Their sincere faces were shining up at her like cut flowers. The younger one was pudgy, with sandy hair snipped in a line across the middle of the back of his head, as though he'd had a run-in with a bush hog. He said, "We need to help out at home, 'cause Mama's lost her job and has to get oddities."

"That ain't it, Abe. It's *com*-oddities," Jeb said slowly.



“Cheese and sacks of no-count stuff,” Abe said, making a face.

“What are you doing with my dirt?” Mary asked. Their wagon had some of the new dirt in it.

“We was going to help you move it—fill in that hole.” Jeb was suddenly a funny sight, the way he was acting—like an experienced building contractor.

Mary studied the boys closely. Getting help had been hard since she inherited this unmanageable property from her uncle. She was busy with pots. She had orders to fill for her customer’s spring catalogue, and she hadn’t kept up with the outdoor work. The leaves had been falling when she moved in, the previous October. She hadn’t raked or mowed. She knew the frontage had to be kept clear or she’d be fined, but the point held no urgency for her. The barn was full of machinery that she had not troubled herself to use. Recently Mrs. Hayes, a neighbor down the road, had

dropped by to chat and snoop. She said, “Your uncle always cleaned out the woods and picked up the limbs and kept it mowed like a park. But you’ve got all them flowerpots and sandbags. That’s not how your uncle kept this place.”

Mary, instantly spiteful, thought of the woman as the Nasty-Nice Neighbor, but she took out an ad in the paper for a yard man. One fellow said he would come and mow the woods, but he never came. Another took the job, raked leaves for two hours, and then went home with a headache. He called later to say that he was allergic to leaf mold and had to quit. Then a woman called and accused her of running a sexist ad. Mary dropped the ad. Sometimes she just didn’t think, she told herself. Most of the time she just didn’t think. She had to focus on one thing at a time. She was here in Kentucky, not in Santa Fe. She had to make pots, fill orders. She had abandoned everything else, on the advice of Henry Thoreau, who said, “Simplify, simplify,” and Henry

Ford, who said, "Simplicate, then add lightness." Ford was speaking about his formula for airplanes, but his idea would apply to anything, she thought.

When she had visited here as a little girl, the shed was her playhouse. She played in these woods, where these boys now explored. The woods were thick then, shielding the outhouse from the road. One year when she came back to visit, Uncle Bob and Aunt Reba had a new bathroom with lime-green imitation tiles. That tileboard had now buckled from the mildew behind it.

"Well, maybe I could use your help," Mary said to the boys.

They wore baggy jeans and had their baseball caps on backwards. Their little red wagon was rusty, and in one end it had yellow scum and wads of clotted comic books.

"We can weed-eat," Jeb said to Mary.

"We weed-eated our fencerow yesterday," Abe said. "Mama said we done it good."

"Let's just fill in the hole," Mary told them. "It's where an old outhouse used to be, and it's falling in. I want to fill it where the tree roots are showing."

THE RAZOR

She sat in the booth
across from him in shadow
and her wide brown eyes
softened and flared
as she spoke remembering
the sickly adored
father of her girlhood—
how she brought him tea
and his newspaper, how
she stood beside him
while he shaved, her head
as high as the washbowl,
and lathered her face
the way he did, and shaved
using her forefinger
as a Gillette Safety Razor.

Her voice in an ardor
of old tenderness
lightened the darkness
of the bar at midnight.
She pigtailed his hair
and in his room rubbed
moisturizer from a jar
to smooth his wrinkles.

—DONALD HALL

"We need us a dump truck," Abe said solemnly.

Maybe his hair had been trimmed with a weed-eater, Mary thought. "Do you know what an outhouse is?" she asked.

They shook their heads.

"I'll bet you've never seen one."

Their faces lacked all curiosity. She might have said "Environmental Protection Agency" and aroused more excitement.

"All right," she said to the boys. "If you can move that dirt and fill in this hole this afternoon, I'll pay you five dollars."

"Ten," Jeb said. "There's two of us. Five dollars apiece."

She grunted an okay.

The boys got to work. She watched them from the clubhouse, where she was shaping a medium-size pot. Her pots were simple and functional, not like the useless multi-textured art pieces she used to make out in Santa Fe. She had OD'd on artiness—all moonshine and selfishness, she decided. Her pieces had been no better than the glitter-dusted ceramic frogs and elves Aunt Reba had collected. Now she supplied plain pots to a mail-order company that sold them as bread-loaf bakers with recipes. She had tried baking bread in one of them, but it seemed a silly and clumsy thing to do.

Every few minutes she glanced up to check on the boys. What an odd pair they were, with old men's names. They even spoke like old men.

Concentrating on the spinning mud was hard while the boys were there. She gave up and went outside. She began burning leaves in the trash barrel. Then the boys came up behind her, startling her.

"You can't burn till four-thirty," Jeb said. "When the wind dies down."

"Is this any of your business?" Mary asked, heaving leaves into the flames.

"They'll get you. They fly over in helicopters a-looking for people burning."

"And they look for Mary-Juanita," the little one said.

"How do you know that?"

"Daddy said."

"How much dirt have you boys moved? I'm not paying you for Sunday-school lessons."

"We need your riding mower to pull our wagon, so it'll be faster."

"That's silly."

"We can make twice as many loads."

The idea tempted her. She could get the mower out. She had filled it with gas before the yard man's two-hour visit. A two-hour yard man ought to be twice as good as a sixty-minute man, she thought, remembering the raunchy old song. She had always thought it should be the theme song for *60 Minutes*. Her mind was flying around loose. She was suddenly eager to look at the equipment in the barn.

She went indoors for the key to the barn. Uncle Bob

and Aunt Reba's decrepit old house resembled an antiques mall, with random collections of grimy old stuff. Mary had cleared out a couple of rooms for her needs and crammed the bric-a-brac into the other rooms. She shoved away the needlepoint pillows, the artificial flowers, the Coca-Cola memorabilia—Bob and Reba's lifetime.

The boys followed her to the barn. Abe was dragging a tobacco stick. With another stick Jeb was whipping at bushes. "Leave those bushes alone," she said. "They'll bloom soon, and you're not going to pull their heads off when they do."

She opened the barn. Inside was a treasure house of equipment—a leaf blower, several mowers, a riding lawn tractor, and a three-wheeled all-terrain vehicle.

"Wow," Jeb said. "A three-wheeler!"

"Gah," Abe said. His mouth hung open.

She set them to work with the riding mower, but before long they were back again, bursting right through her clubhouse door. She was about to spin off a pot. She kept working with fierce concentration.

"You need to get that three-wheeler out and ride it some," Jeb said.

"No, I believe not." The pottery wheel slowed to a whisper.

"It'll rust out if you don't ride it."

Abe said, "I want to ride it."

"Have you got that dirt moved?" The pot gleamed, shiny and fresh.

"We need that three-wheeler," Jeb said. "It'll pull that wagon better."

"One tire's flat," she said.

"We've got a pump at home. We'll go get it!"

They took her vague nod for a yes and went flying home.

She loaded some pots into a crate to carry to the kiln. She liked the way she could bake something into place. She liked the illusion of permanence in something as fragile as pottery.

In a few minutes she saw the boys coming through the woods with a pump. They had entered the barn and pumped up the tire of the three-wheeler by the time she reached them. Jeb had the gas cap off and was feeling inside the tank with his fingers. "It's good to go," he cried.

She thought how satisfying it would be to take a willow switch to these boys.

Jeb said excitedly, "Our papaw said he ain't seen none of these three-wheelers since heck was a pup."

"Papaw's at our house," Abe said. "He sleeps all day, but he woke up and got us the pump."

"I don't have a key to this thing," she said.

"It don't use a key—it has a button," Jeb said. He was already starting it up. "If we hook it up to the wagon, we can pull the dirt a lot faster."

"We're good workers," Abe said. "We're worky-holics."

They were already driving off, like a bus pulling away without seeing her signal. Abe held on behind Jeb. The three-wheeler was buckjumping. She ran along behind them to the pile of dirt.

"You've got too much dirt," Jeb said. "We need to take some down to the creek down there."

He pointed beyond some bushes to a small creek on her boundary. Even in April it was only a trickle.

"If we had a bale of hay we could load it on the wagon and we could ride it down there and make us a dam," Jeb said.

Mary shook her head. "If you dam that up, you'll flood the whole bottom."

Jeb said, "If we had some beavers to come, they could make a good dam."

"They could make it with sticks," Abe said. "And trees."

"We could catch some fish if we had a pond," Jeb said. "We could catch some beavers, too, if there was a dam."

"Now, don't you go damming that up," Mary said calmly, as if they were having a reasonable discussion. "I haven't seen any beavers, and if you dam up the creek, Mr. Smith's pond over yonder will dry up and we'll have a pond here. That's like stealing somebody's pond."

She saw the gleam in Jeb's eyes jump like an electric spark over a synapse to his brother's eyes. She said, "Now go on and finish spreading that dirt like I hired you to."

She went back to her work. She had to spin another set of pots. She cut the clay and slapped it angrily on the table. She didn't believe that the boys would fall in the pit where the outhouse had been, because of the tree roots, but if they did, it was their own fault. They were pestering her. She slapped the clay down again. She pumped the wheel and helped the mud spin into shape. The boys were moving dirt. They wanted to make a dam. Making a dam would be like making a clay pot. Had they really said the three-wheeler would rust out if it wasn't ridden? She shivered. She thought about the last time she had had sex. Her doctor said that regular sex kept the tissues healthy.

Mary looked out the window at the woods. It was full of boys—at least a dozen of them, all sizes. A raggedy-haired one was driving the three-wheeler pell-mell through the bumpy woods. The boys whooped and squealed. The woods reverberated with their ruckus. The dead birds suddenly jolted her mind. She could imagine the pile of bluebirds and robins, their decomposing bodies clustered as if they had come together for a sacrifice. She felt remote from the scene, as if it were happening on TV.

She went inside the house to the bathroom. She was startled to see a vague hag in the mirror. She thought she should try a mudpack on her face. She had plenty of clay for it. There ought to be a glazing technique to preserve the face. The telephone rang.

"I've seen what's going on in your woods," the Nasty-

Nice Neighbor said. "I'm afraid those little boys are going to get hurt."

"I'm watching them," Mary said impatiently.

"Bob Burney used to let the boys around the neighborhood ride that three-wheeler, but then they passed a law against those things. Didn't you know that? What if one of them little boys gets hurt? Have you lost your mind?"

"Are you going to call the police?" Mary shot back. "Why don't you have us all arrested?"

"I don't want to fool with the police," the Nasty-Nice Neighbor said. "You can't trust them."

"How do you know I didn't give that three-wheeler to those boys?" Mary said. "If they own it, then what they do with it is their responsibility."

"Well, I was just calling to let you know somebody might get hurt and they'll sue you to kingdom come. I don't like to meddle, but I figured I'd call you instead of the police. I would never call the police. That's not how we do things around here."

Mary slammed down the telephone. Her muddy handprint wrapped the receiver like a sleeve.

The three-wheeler was headed for the creek. A skinny, dark-haired boy was driving, and he was picking up speed. The machine bucked and snorted. The rest of the boys were running, trying to catch him. They jumped the creek with him, splashing through the shallow water. The boys were all yelling and shrieking, clamoring for rides. She hadn't realized that three-wheelers were outlawed. Where had she been? But why should she know such a thing anyway? She realized now that if they were illegal, buying or selling them was also probably illegal. She had counted on getting some money eventually from the yard equipment. She shivered at the cold possibility that if she were angry enough, she could let a kid get hurt.

The mud on her hands was caking dry, drawing her skin taut. The leaf fire was almost out. The smoke had turned in her direction. If she hollered, the boys wouldn't hear her—the wind was wrong. They weren't listening anyway. She was just a strange, unkempt woman baying at the wind. In another setting she would be taken for a bag lady. The bag part would be easy. Aunt Reba had saved paper grocery bags, a thousand bundles of them.

"Let me show you how to drive this thing," she said when she reached the boys. They surrounded her—hard little bodies, steamy and dirty, all in droopy clothing. She said, "I know a few tricks. I can ride this thing like a broomstick. Remember that scene in *E.T.*? The bicycles in the sky? Do you realize what witches can do on a contraption like this?"

Jeb shoved the dark-haired boy off the seat and let Mary take it.

"That would be funny, to see you ride," Jeb said, with his Humphrey Bogart manner. "Come on, y'all. Let her ride." Let's see the dame give it a whirl.

"She might take off on it, and we'd never see it again," one of the boys said with a worried pout.

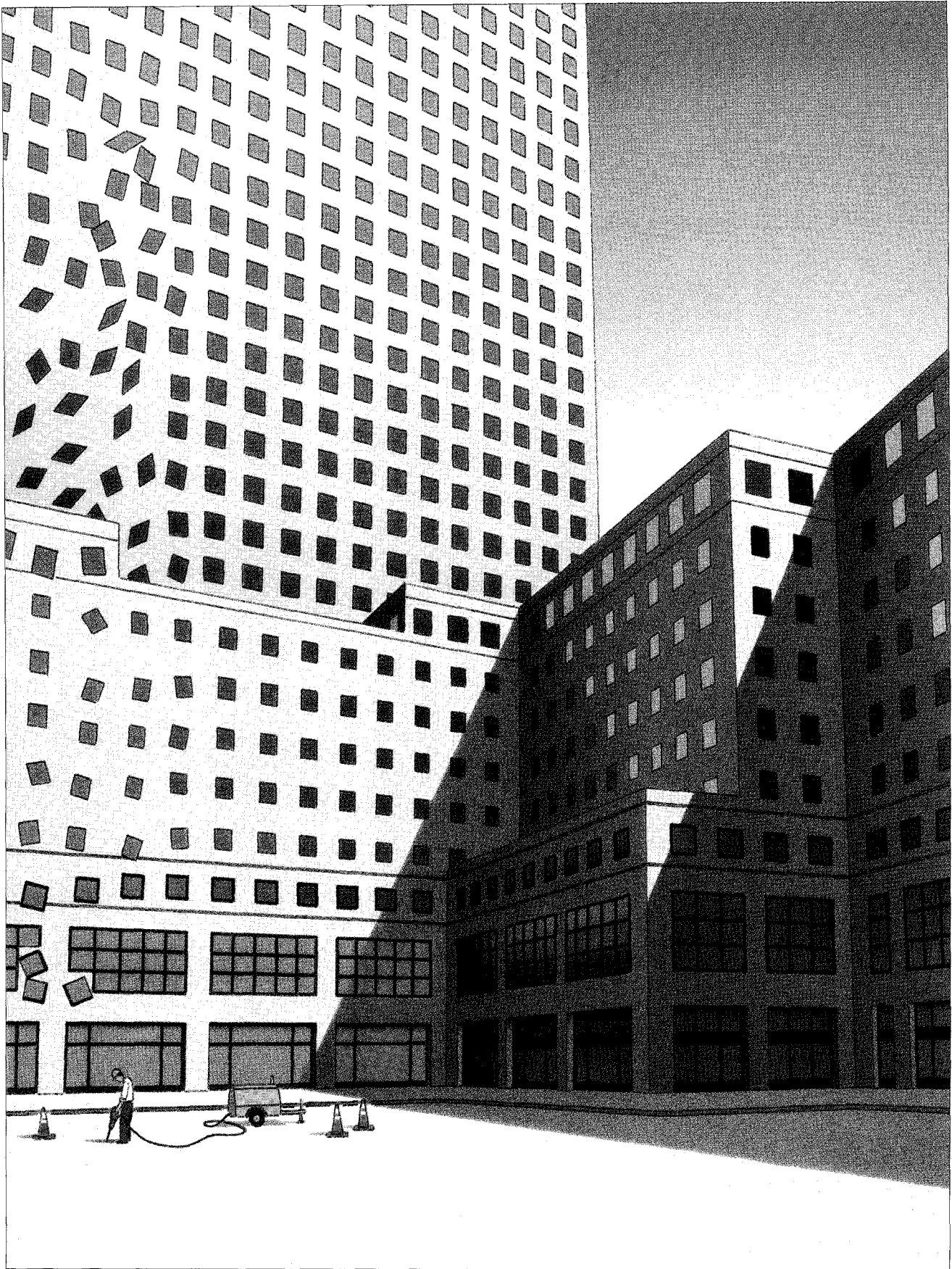
"Is she *really* a witch?" a boy with a burr-cut asked Jeb.

The burr-cut boy's T-shirt read SEVEN DAYS WITHOUT PRAYER MAKES ONE WEAK.

"Witch isn't even the half of it," she said. She straddled the three-wheeler, grabbed the handles, and tested them. She aimed at a line of open-mouthed boys, little pups who jumped as she headed for them. She gunned the overgrown tricycle across the bumpy ground through the trees. She passed the stump where the bluebirds and robins lay heaped like Jonestown victims. Skirting the outhouse hole, she shifted into a higher gear, and then one still higher. She drove the three-wheeler out into the road, picked up speed, and waved good-bye.

As she rode, she dreamed about David McAllister's Harley, how she had mounted it behind him and they thundered down a dark country road rimmed by low natural walls of red rock. It was in the spring of 1983, in New Mexico. She hugged his hard stomach and smelled his back, her face on his seasoned leather. She recalled that night on the motorcycle with vividness, as if she were seeing a movie in her head. There she was, riding snugly behind him, feeling unafraid and buoyant and blessed with youth. Earlier she had heard the Harley growl to a halt outside her house, and David came in carrying a dozen hot tamales wrapped in newspaper. He waited while she dried her hair. He microwaved a cup of coffee left in that morning's pot. She asked about his dog, who had run away. He was happy, because his dog had come back. She was happy because he was happy. The grease from the hot tamales smeared the kitchen table, where they sat for a long while, falling in love. And then they went for the night ride through the canyon, undulating with the road.

When she saw him for the last time, he was in a hospital in a cloud of cocaine. She said good-bye to him, but he didn't hear her. She drove west on Route 40. The hue and texture of that cloud around him seemed to be projected out onto the giant scrub-board sky. It was as though his mind were spewing waste against the blue vault. He always used the word "waste." He could have been an architect, she thought. He saw all landscapes as constructions—the vistas and lines of rocks and sand and scrub and sky. A wasteland, he kept saying. She couldn't keep loving someone who would squander the sky itself. That was the last time she had let herself be in love. He was only one small event in her past, one of those unmanageable pieces of her life that she had swept under the road as if it were a rug, and now here she was in Kentucky, looking for road signs. But she was still riding that Harley. She remembered seeing by the side of the road, in the bike's swooping light, an owl the size of a small child. It revolved its head and rose—with marvelous, slow grace—into the blank night. ■



FAÇADE *by Guy Billout*

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

TRAVEL

ASSISTED HIKING

Purists regard using a helicopter to reach luscious mountain locales as somehow unfair. Let them

BY BARBARA WALLRAFF

.....

Before the helicopter arrives, you and the ten or so members of your hiking group surrender your walking sticks to the guide, who bundles them together; lay your knapsacks on the ground to form a neat little Cordura cairn; and then huddle next to it, squatting or kneeling, with head bowed, so that the rotor wash doesn't blow your glasses to kingdom come and coat your eyeballs with grit. As the clattering mechanical monster descends, your group could be mistaken for a cargo cult performing oblations.

Travelers' tips: Once the helicopter has touched down, don't walk around the back of it, where the rear rotor is whirling so fast it's invisible. Nor is it considered smart to walk downhill toward a helicopter whose overhead rotor is turning.

There are many other tips where these came from, and last September, when my husband, Julian, and I went on a heli-hiking expedition in the Purcell Mountains, part of western Canada's Columbia range, I learned more about helicopter safety procedures than I really wanted to know. I can show you how to bust out the seatback in front of the jump seat in order to escape in an emergency. I know the approved method for climbing up and out of a chopper that happens to have crash-landed on its side. The emphasis on safety apparently pays off: in the twenty-two years that Canadian Mountain Holidays, the company we traveled with, has been running summer programs, no one has been killed or seriously injured by its helicopters.

In advance of our trip with CMH—originally a pioneer of heli-skiing, which these days keeps five of its eleven lodges open in the summer for the benefit of heli-hikers—I had imagined that zooming around in the helicopter would be the main attraction. I was conscious that the reputation of the Purcell Mountains hardly compares to the one that draws throngs from around the world to the Canadian Rockies, a few hours away. But the Purcells turned out to be gorgeous—immense saw-toothed peaks, with ice fields and year-round snow cornices and high mountain lakes, with waterfalls and river gorges and hundred-year-old trappers' paths—and the trip made me think they deserve to be much better known.

Starting each hike by helicopter was definitely interesting. There was the moment, for instance, when we were within a few feet of touching down on a mountainside and our guide spotted grizzly-bear tracks at our intended landing site. Back up we flew. Another time, I was in a rear-facing center seat, so I couldn't see where we were going. We touched down and performed our landing ritual, approximately the reverse of the one for takeoff. Not until the chopper was well away from us did I stand up and look around. We were on a flat, sandy patch no more than twenty feet wide between a lichen-spattered mountainside and a waterfall. Beyond the waterfall lay a dead-calm lake, and beyond the lake, in the middle distance,

loomed jagged peaks partly covered by the eerie, glittering white-blue of an ice field. It was as if I had been teleported there.

When Julian and I arrived at Canadian Mountain Holidays' Bobbie Burns Lodge (guests are brought in by helicopter, having first been delivered in a big bus from Banff or Lake Louise, in Alberta, to a helipad in British Columbia), last Labor Day weekend, drizzle was falling intermittently out of a heavy overcast. "Good news!" one of the guides said in greeting. "There's a foot of new powder in the mountains!" She gestured toward the one peak that was visible in the murk. The idea of snow so early in the year brought me up short—I had been imagining frolics in meadows strewn with flowers. But that white patch looked very far away, and, figuring that we could just go hiking someplace else, I wondered why snow way up there seemed to matter to her.

It didn't take long to find out. First we collected some gear from the communal stock—as part of its basic package, CMH lends guests most of the gear they might need, from good-quality boots, rainwear, and warm parkas to knapsacks and walking sticks. Then we settled into our room; had lunch; were assigned to one of four groups according to an estimate we'd previously given of our hiking ability; got a helicopter-safety lesson from Jens Gessner, the lodge's pilot, who received his training in the German air force; and flew 3,000 feet up the mountain—pretty high up, given that the lodge itself sits at nearly 4,500 feet—to one of the few hiking areas that the snow had not rendered completely impassable. We scrambled out of the helicopter into a winter wonderland.

Sarah, the member of the certified-guide staff who had been so upbeat at



the lodge, obviously loved teaching her charges about the flora and fauna of these mountains, but that afternoon she had a tough time finding any. She dredged up some heath and heather from under the snow and pointed out Indian paintbrush and an alpine larch, a species said to signal the end of summer by dropping its needles; the little tree was still prickly and green. And Sarah found us some elk tracks and a bemused hummingbird darting among the yellow and purple asters that poked up forlornly. Mostly, though, we spent the afternoon hiking, with each step sinking into the snow nearly to the tops of our CMH-issued waterproof gaiters.

The sun came out the next day, blazing off the shiny white surfaces and warming the air until we were happy to hike—even to picnic—in our shirtsleeves. By afternoon we were finally able to strip off those gaiters and hike on solid surfaces of green, gray, or brown, amid berries and gaudy fungi, ferns and mosses, and deciduous bushes whose leaves were beginning

to turn. Once the snow had started to melt and the dramatic rock-black and snow-white landscapes gradually filled in with color—once it was clear that the art-photography vistas were just a bonus and we were also going to get the summertime picture-postcard scenery we had looked forward to—nearly all of us came around to Sarah's attitude toward the snowfall.

The group quickly got a cheerful team spirit going—and so, to judge from people's behavior in the lodge's dining room and the common room, did most members of the other three groups. But we were all free at any point to opt out of our guided hikes and either just laze around or explore various trails that meandered away from the lodge.

I should mention a few dissenters. Against the idea that heli-hiking is glorious. One is my brother, Dean, a sometime leader of Sierra Club hikes, who was appalled when he heard of my plans. For one thing, he told me, I was depriving myself of the most important value in hiking—as he put it,

“a direct, intimate, sustained relationship with the landscape.” Well. Letting a helicopter do the heavy lifting did not seem like a deprivation to me. It meant freedom from having to strap on a ponderous frame backpack, trudge uphill for days, camp out, and prepare meager meals of freeze-dried who-knows-what over a tinny camp stove in a howling wind in order to see that particular landscape—an effort that, if you haven't guessed, I would never undertake. Though I admire mountaineers, I have no delusion that I am one. Heli-hiking allowed me to treat expeditions to remote glacier-capped peaks as if they were so many walks in the park.

Then, too, as far as Dean is concerned, the very idea of heli-hiking is environmentally insensitive, “walking heavy on the land.” Once I was on the trip, I wished I were able to introduce him to my fellow heli-hikers John and Ann: they would have told him in no uncertain terms that it was too late to worry about despoiling *this* landscape. John and Ann had arrived in

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Canada under the impression that the lodge was set in pristine wilderness. They live and work on a biological reserve in Costa Rica, where they hope to re-establish the indigenous harpy eagle in the wild—so they have a pretty good idea of what pristine wilderness is supposed to look like. By their standards the uninhabited 400 square miles that surround the Bobbie Burns Lodge look like something else again: most of the forest is less than a hundred years old, and in the more readily accessible areas logging continues. One day we did briefly hike through a clear-cut—an activity that John, as he wrote in the guest book, found "depressing." My group's guide that day, Jean-François, told us he had previously worked as a logger and as a tree planter for a logging company, and he wanted us to see all the healthy baby trees growing up amid the snarl of downed branches the loggers had left behind. I teased J.F. about it, but I found that part of our day educational.

John and Ann were further disappointed by the accommodations. According to my informal researches, this was very much a minority opinion, but, let's be honest, the Bobbie Burns Lodge is not the Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat. The bedrooms in the lodge, though comfortable, are simple: for instance, we stored our belongings on pegs and shelves rather than in closets and bureaus. The words that spring to mind to describe the food in the dining room are "plentiful" and "wholesome," rather than "sinfully delicious." But I didn't for a minute feel that we were actually roughing it in a lodge that offered a sauna, an outdoor hot tub, a masseur, an exercise room, an indoor climbing wall, volleyball and bocce courts, a basketball hoop, a pool table, a cricket pitch, four-course dinners with wine, and a well-stocked bar.

Not the least of the lodge's charms was that the staff worked hard to please us. One day they prepared a lunchtime cookout on a pinnacle. My hiking group was the first to arrive, and we burst into laughter when out the helicopter windows we glimpsed

a lone man in a chef's apron flipping burgers and chicken breasts on a smoky grill in the middle of nowhere. Another day the staff set up two Tyrolean traverses. Carefully supervised and assisted, clipped into nylon harnesses by our guides, we each walked off the sides of cliffs to ride a rope across gorges high above churning whitewater.

Worth bearing in mind is the lodge-to-lodge option, which about half the guests (not including us) had chosen: On your last morning at Bobbie Burns you leave your bags outside your door, catch a helicopter ride to Grizzly Ridge, and hike along it until you feel like calling it a day. At that point your guide radios the helicopter at another CMH property, the Bugaboo Lodge, to come carry you off there, where your bags await.

Instead Julian and I took the helicopter back to the helipad. The bus sat ready to take us to the airport hotel in Calgary. Among our fellow passengers were a man who had visited Bobbie Burns many times to go heli-skiing and his nonskier wife, who had been curious about where he'd been spending a week every year. Now she knows. Of course, in the winter he doesn't get the cookout, the Tyrolean traverses, or even the hummingbird. Still, I don't think that come December she'll be pitying the guy. ▀

Canadian Mountain Holidays lodges, in various parts of the Columbia range of British Columbia, offer heli-hiking and mountaineering from late June through mid-September. Packages range from three nights (beginning at \$1,382 Canadian, or about \$880 U.S., per person all inclusive) to six (beginning at \$2,597 Canadian, or about \$1,650 U.S.). CMH's "personal vacation planning service" will make whatever other local arrangements you'd like before and after your heli-hiking excursion; we were quite happy with the hotels chosen for us in Banff and Calgary. If airline schedules had permitted, however, I might have preferred to spend the night before our heli-hiking expedition in Lake Louise rather than Banff: Lake Louise is a good deal closer to the helipad, so guests can get an extra hour or two of sleep.



DESIGN

ARCHITECTURE FOR ART'S SAKE

Exciting new buildings can burnish art museums' reputations, and museums are commissioning lots of them

BY ANN WILSON LLOYD

.....

Is it "the Bilbao effect"? After Frank Gehry's visually pyrotechnic Guggenheim Museum Bilbao opened its doors, in the fall of 1997, and saw more than 1.3 million visitors stream through them within a year, that museum was widely credited with having sparked an economic boom in northern Spain. Now its success seems to be a prime factor in igniting a building boom among art museums all across the United States. In the past four years at least forty American art institutions have announced, begun, or finished additions or new buildings, and a goodly proportion of these involve architecture as spectacle. Robert A. Ivy, the editor in chief of the journal *Architectural Record*, explains the phenomenon this way: "Gehry's Bilbao has conflated cultural, economic, and political interests, alerting all to what a dazzling object in the cityscape can accomplish."

As might be expected, much noteworthy activity is occurring in northeastern and West Coast urban centers. Widely publicized plans call for a lower-Manhattan branch of New York's Guggenheim Museum, a new bundle of titanium ribbons similar to Bilbao's and also by Frank Gehry; and an extension to New York's Whitney Museum of American Art by the visionary Dutch firm

headed by Rem Koolhaas. In Philadelphia the Alexander Calder Museum has been announced, designed by Tadao Ando, the Japanese Zen master of light and concrete. In Hartford, Connecticut, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, the oldest public art museum in the country, is planning an expansion designed by an experimental Dutch team called UN Studio, known for its high-concept work. And in Boston three art institutions—the Museum of Fine Arts, the Harvard University Art Museums, and the Institute of Contemporary Art—also have ambitious building plans.

On the West Coast, Bellevue, Washington, boasts a brand-new art museum by Steven Holl, who has been acclaimed for his recent museum of contemporary art in Helsinki. And San Francisco's Fine Arts Museums, seeking to redesign the historic M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, have chosen the Swiss firm of Herzog & de Meuron, which is best known for having recently turned a former power plant in London into the monumentally scaled Tate Modern.

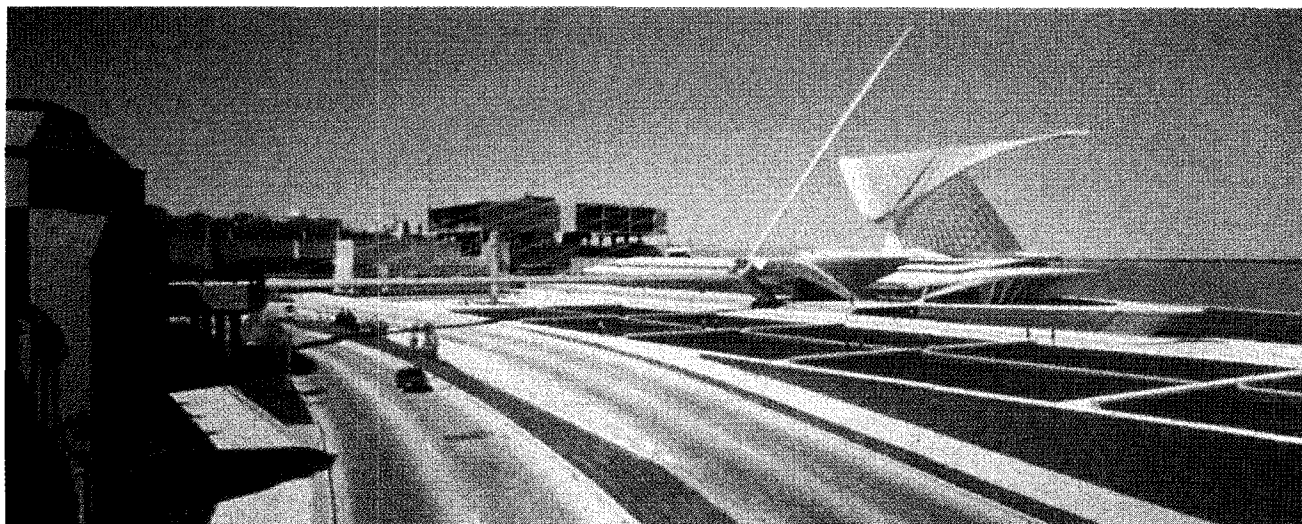
Mid-American cities, though they are often considered to be more culturally conservative than cities on the coasts, are not lagging behind this trend. Denver taxpayers two years ago approved

a \$62.5 million city and county bond initiative to fund a 146,000-square-foot extension to the Denver Art Museum which has been designed by the Berlin-based avant-garde architect Daniel Libeskind; the museum is raising another \$50 million in endowment to cover operating costs. Last July the city's mayor, Wellington Webb, predicted that the jumble of metal-clad, faceted geometric forms that make up Libeskind's design will "put us on the map as a world-class destination city."

St. Louis will actually be the site of the first Tadao Ando museum in the country, when the private Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, created to house the Pulitzer family's famous collection of modern art, opens this fall. Also in St. Louis, Washington University has plans for a new museum and arts-department building by the Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki, who is known for combining high tech with high craft; and the Forum for Contemporary Art has broken ground for a new building, sited next door to the Pulitzer Foundation, that has been designed by Allied Works, a sophisticated firm in Portland, Oregon.

Meanwhile, Milwaukee is introducing the first U.S. project by the futuristic Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava: an extension to the Milwaukee Art Museum's existing building. And Cincinnati will have the first U.S. project by Zaha Hadid, an Iraqi-born, London-based architect whom many regard as one of the field's most exciting practitioners: a

Above: Savannah's Telfair Museum annex



Above: the Milwaukee Art Museum addition, with its brise soleil; below, Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center

new building for the Contemporary Arts Center. Art institutions in Savannah, Georgia; Kansas City, Missouri; Atlanta; Austin, Texas; and the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina have also recently announced building plans.

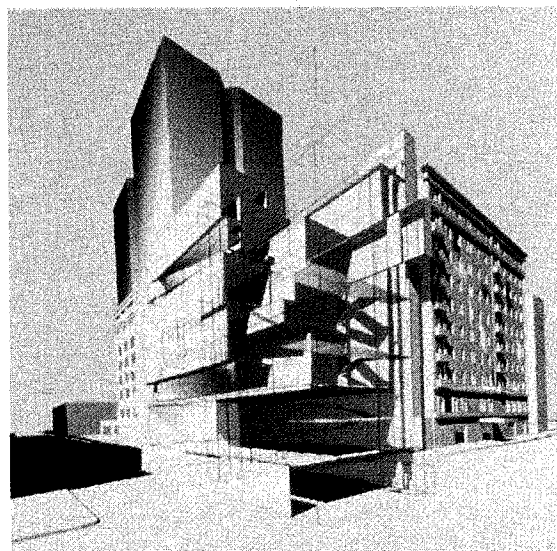
Needless to say, architects and museum professionals are delighted with the trend, seeing it as a chance to create or commission great art. A museum building is now often thought of as monumental sculpture—potentially the most important work in an institution's collection. How paintings and sculpture actually fit into the bold new forms remains somewhat controversial. Mimi Gaudieri, the executive director of the Association of Art Museum Directors, and other enthusiasts among professionals in the field insist that there's no conflict between a museum's mission and high-profile architecture. "On the contrary, an exciting building lends itself to art," Gaudieri says. "It's part of the growth of the whole museum field. Years ago we were just sleepy institutions with no profile, and all of a sudden things have changed. Museums have woken up. We are much more aware of the community and are working more closely with it." Museums realize that an engaged public expects not only new galleries but also grander lobbies and more lecture halls, libraries, cafés, and shops, all of which may help to further engage the public—including potential donors. "I see financial support for this," Gaudieri says, "but I also see community support."

Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and Savannah provide good case studies in communities' response to innovative architecture. In Milwaukee the daily *Journal Sentinel* has published a number of articles over the past year about Santiago Calatrava's 142,000-square-foot extension to the Milwaukee Art Museum. More than a few of these gleefully contrasted the stereotype of Milwaukee as a frozen outpost of beer and blue-collar values with the reputation that international acclaim is sure to bring. A piece published last June quoted the executive director of the Greater Milwaukee Convention & Visitors Bureau, William A. Hanbury, anticipating the Calatrava addition (and sounding very much like Denver's Mayor Webb): "We've never had that one icon—except for maybe a bratwurst—that we can say is most reflective of Milwaukee as a world-class city and destination."

The budget for the Milwaukee project has grown from \$35 million, the figure announced when plans were unveiled five years ago, to \$100 million, and the museum has already raised \$83 million of that, most of it from private donors. The museum's director, Russell Bowman, says that at first he worried that the dramatic design might be controversial, but his fears turned

out to be needless: "It was immediately embraced and became the driver of the capital campaign."

Calatrava, who is known for his spiky, organic shapes, has designed a long, low appendage to the museum's building (originally designed by Eero Saarinen in 1957, with an addition by David Kahler that was completed in 1975) on the shore of Lake Michigan. New galleries inside the appendage opened last month. The civic "icon" appears at the far end, away from the original building: a soaring, ninety-foot-high kinetic structure with curved fins of high-tech carbon fiber. This is expected to be complete in the fall, once some engineering glitches have been worked out. Called a brise soleil, it is functional as both a sunshade—controlling heat and light in the dramatic glass entry



TOP: CHRISTOPHER VALTIN; BOTTOM: ZAHA HADID

pavilion below it—and an image builder. It can be seen symbolically as a sail or a wing, and locals have already anointed it, according to Bowman, “our St. Louis arch, our Sydney Opera House.”

For a time it seemed as if all Milwaukee had developed a crush on Calatrava. By the middle of last year he had been asked to design four other projects in the city, including a high-rise apartment building and a gymnasium complex at a local engineering college. All but one of these, a footbridge over the Milwaukee River, have been quietly shelved—which is for the best, Bowman says. “Many people saw the impact ambitious architecture had on our project and thought to emulate it. That’s an important idea, and I hope some of the projects can go forward, but I don’t think Calatrava should be the only architect for Milwaukee.”

Cincinnati would appear to be just entering its crush phase with Zaha Hadid. Her new building for the Contemporary Arts Center broke ground this spring and is scheduled for completion in 2003. Hadid’s doings are frequently mentioned in the local press, but she has so far received invitations to design only modest additional local projects, such as sets and costumes for a production of *Aida* (since postponed) and a pig for Big Pig Gig (this is Cincinnati’s version of the charity events now held in many cities in which celebrities are asked to decorate things of a particular kind—plastic cows, fish, hats—which are then auctioned off).

The low-key but positive reception Hadid is getting is notable in part because Cincinnati is where a decade ago the arts center and its director at the time, Dennis Barrie, were prosecuted on grounds of obscenity for presenting an exhibition of photography by Robert Mapplethorpe. Seven “transgressive” images among the 175 photographs on view were hotly denounced—and defended—nationwide. “People outside this region remember the Mapplethorpe exhibition,” the center’s current director, Charles Desmarais, says, “and they conclude that the CAC is somehow in conflict with the community.” But, as Desmarais points out, Barrie was ultimately acquitted. “This is a largely conservative community,” he says, “but we have some of the most influen-

tial, progressive people supporting us.”

Fundraising in Cincinnati, as in Milwaukee, took off when the celebrity architect’s vision was unveiled. Also as in Milwaukee, at that point it needed to: Before Hadid signed on, the budget was a modest \$15 million. Afterward, Desmarais says, “we kept upping the goal, and we’ve now raised over thirty-three of the total thirty-four million.” He adds, “The enormous attention this building has gotten in the press has been a huge part of why we’ve been successful.” More than two thirds of the money has been privately raised.

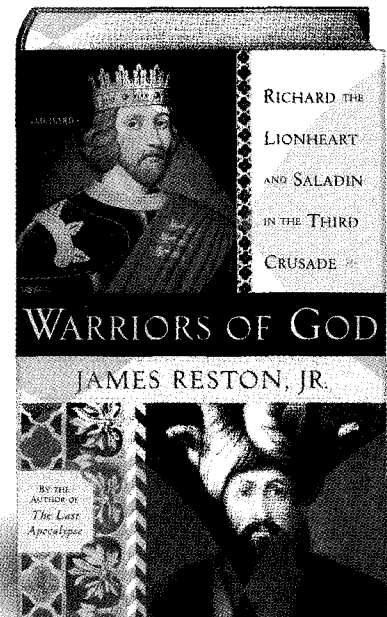
The arts center, which does not collect but presents temporary exhibitions, broke ground late this spring for the 82,265-square-foot building. Desmarais says, “We had a pretty good sense from the start that we’d have success.” The only doubts expressed by his largely Jewish selection committee were about whether prospective major donors might object to funding a design by an Iraqi woman. “The question was raised, and they came up with the right answer—that they were not going to be limited by their fears but would make sure people knew why this choice was made.”

The reason for the choice, Desmarais says, had everything to do with exciting design. Hadid’s plans will allow the arts center to function as an organism within the downtown cityscape. They feature what the architect calls “a kit” of interlocking galleries of different sizes, shapes, and heights, unified by an “urban carpet” of concrete that starts at the street and sweeps up all six levels. The renderings depict square concrete horizontal tubes in a loose, vertiginous stack that is cantilevered toward the street. The design has been widely praised by critics as breakthrough museum architecture.

Desmarais explains that Hadid intentionally devised something that would respond to the busy intersection outside and the lively contemporary art inside. “What we said we wanted was a building that was not just a container for art, and Zaha has taken up this theme with a vengeance. Without having a permanent collection to care for, and with a desire to broaden our audience, we took some major risks in terms of how a building might work and what it might look like.”

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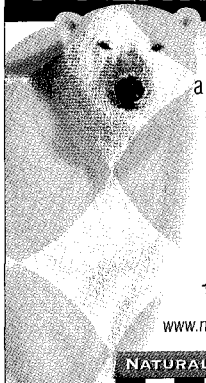
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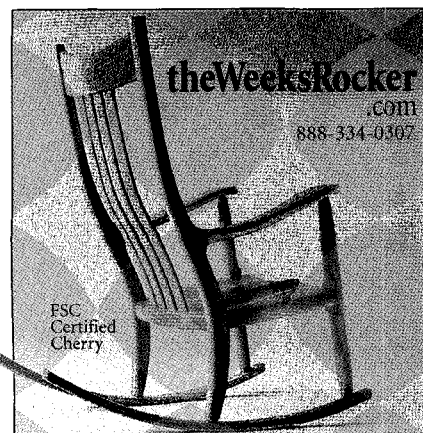


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The eccentrically shaped galleries, for example, might inspire artists to create site-specific installations. "Zaha is a very avid fan of contemporary art," Desmarais says. "She is giving us a place where you will see works of art as you can see them nowhere else."

Milwaukee and Cincinnati may be conservative cities, but their identities are less fixed than that of historic Savannah. Here a crush on a contemporary architect is less likely to form. Savannah's Telfair Museum of Art, an encyclopedic museum housed in an 1819 Regency-style mansion, needed more room for twentieth-century and contemporary art, and the museum's board chose the Israeli-born, Boston-based architect Moshe Safdie to design a 63,000-square-foot annex nearby. Safdie has designed museums in cities all over the world and won special admiration for his persistence through long, delicate political negotiations in the building of the Hebrew Union College and the Children's Holocaust Memorial, both in Jerusalem.

Persistence was also needed in Savannah. Two years ago the museum's capital campaign was abruptly halted after the city's Historic District Board of Review rescinded its approval of Safdie's design. Over the following eighteen months the debate escalated into a shouting match between those who wanted no modern building at all in their city and those who felt that contemporary architecture sensitive to Savannah's heritage could only enhance the city's beauty. The fuss wasn't about anything as showy as titanium-ribbon bundles, mechanical wings, or stacked concrete tubes: the design of the annex, to be sited on one of the many squares laid out by General James Oglethorpe in the eighteenth century, is sleek and modernist, its proportions and demeanor almost classical.

With twists and turns worthy of a southern-gothic saga, the review board put Safdie and supporters of the annex—led by the museum's director, Diane Lesko—through a series of emotional meetings in which minute details were wrangled over. The Savannah press was barraged by equally emotional letters to the editor from local residents on both

sides of the issue: Safdie's design was compared to an airplane hangar and an aquarium—and, after requested changes were made, to an ant farm. Readers supporting Safdie and Lesko evoked the censorship and conformity imposed by Nazis and Communists.

Finally, last July, the board gave its approval to a much revised design, and the fundraising campaign is under way again; the budget for the project is now nearly \$22 million. Safdie had initially planned an all-glass façade that would—depending on the time of day—have revealed the lobby and an undulating stone wall behind it, or reflected the trees in the square. But the review board insisted on less glass and more masonry, and on a reconfiguration of the scale to help the building blend with the surrounding nineteenth-century architecture. "It is a bit more deferential," Safdie says. "Is it better or not? I can't really answer that. It will be okay. I wouldn't do it if I didn't think so." For her part, Lesko is happy that things are finally moving again. "There has not been one innovative twentieth-century civic building in Savannah, ever," she says. "We've always said we want to do a building that Savannah will be proud of in the twenty-first century. This one will set the standard."

At least Safdie and Savannah stuck it out. In late 1999, after less than a year of negotiations, the Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron gave up on their plans for a flat-roofed, glass-walled building for the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, at the University of Texas, in Austin, and walked out. The museum's trustees decided somewhere along the way that the new building should blend in with the unified 1930s campus of limestone and red-tile roofs, and last fall they replaced their first choice with the Boston firm of Kallmann McKinnell & Wood, which is known less for designing architectural landmarks than for assimilating new buildings into college campuses. Perhaps one lesson to be learned from Austin and Savannah is that the Bilbao effect may be more easily replicable in cities that are—as Bilbao was—in need of a cultural identity. There are still plenty of places in America, though, where a dazzling new object may be just the thing. ▀

AS AMERICAN AS WOMEN'S SOCCER?

Everything about the new professional women's soccer league is unorthodox—which is why it may succeed

BY SCOTT STOSSEL

.....

It was a snowy morning on the last Sunday in February, too early to be awake, but inside Mike Boyle's Strength and Conditioning center, in Winchester, Massachusetts, twenty-six women were working out, as devout in their exertions as monks at matins. This was not a casual-jant-on-the-StairMaster sort of workout; Mike Boyle's is not the place for casual jaunts. There are no Pilates classes here, no juice bar, no copies of *Cosmo* or *Glamour*—just machines, weights, and a swath of artificial turf laid across the concrete floor. These women were *working out*: sprints and weights and more sprints, while an imposing trainer in black sweats put them through their paces for two solid hours.

They were the Boston Breakers, one of eight teams in the new Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA), which made its debut in April. The women are already elite athletes; they also represent the future. In the college seminar I teach on sports and culture, nothing infuriates the female students more than the degradation of women that is associated with male sports: bikini-clad ring girls at boxing matches, inanely grinning cheerleaders at basketball and football games, victory-circle girls at auto races. For my students and many of their contemporaries—who have come of age in the era of Title IX, the 1972 law prohibiting sex discrimination in institutions (primarily high schools and colleges) supported by public funds—an increasingly compelling image of femininity is represented by the women at Mike Boyle's: it's not about cheering sports but about aggressively playing them.

Although there have been professional and semi-professional women's soccer leagues in Sweden, Germany, Italy, Japan, and a few other countries for some years, the quality of play in those places is equivalent, at best, to American Division I collegiate-level soccer, and most of the players hold

down day jobs in order to earn a living. WUSA, in contrast, pays real money, and the caliber of play is far and away the best in the world.

The high quality of talent notwithstanding, two realities would seem to make the existence of this league—let alone that it might succeed—unlikely. There is, first, the obliviousness of the average American to soccer as a major sport. And if general lack of enthusiasm for the sport would appear to dim the prospects of any soccer league, male or

female, in this country, the fact that the global soccer culture has historically not tolerated female participation should dim them further. Americans don't like soccer; women are not supposed to play soccer; therefore a women's soccer league in America must fail.

Except it doesn't quite work that way. Rather, our very heedlessness of international soccer values has made us ignorant of women's historical exclusion from the sport. Here women and girls playing soccer is accepted as something routine, even admirable. The fact that soccer remains lodged in the American consciousness less as a professional sport than as a wholesome activity for young people informs the character of WUSA, which in its ethos and economic structure is unlike any league before it.



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FOR THE FIRST TIME, PERHAPS, A TENABLE HISTORY OF JESUS

It won't be found in the Bible. Critical examination of the New Testament Gospels reveal sloppy history, which gives a picture of Jesus more imaginative than factual. Most Christians seem not to notice or care—transcendentalism spins its own reality. But true realists, for whom historical accuracy matters, may be pleased with what the recently discovered *Gospel of Thomas* provides. It consists of 113 notes taken down by Thomas of perplexing things that Jesus said. Thus the notes were probably written down at the time heard and have not suffered alteration—the best kind of source for a history.

Jack Hannah in *You Will Not Taste Death: Jesus and Epicureanism* recognizes the notes as chronologically ordered and correlative with the skeletal history used in the *Gospel of Mark*. He provides all the text of the notes with comments and Marcan context, thereby developing a narrative of Jesus that is tenably historical.

This *historical* Jesus based his teaching on the Epicurean philosophy, not on Judaism with its fasting, praying, almsgiving, and obeying food laws. Instead, this *historical* Jesus said, "Tell no lie and never do what you hate." This *historical* Jesus never mentioned a devil, demons, or hell.

The most radical difference, however, is that Epicureanism also shaped Jesus' thought that God and Caesar are man-made authorities, and that one's ultimate authority should be oneself. Hannah's book is 321 pgs., pbk., \$12 postpaid.

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On a soccer-mad planet—riots occur, work stops, prisoners escape, politicians rise or fall, religious schisms open or close, wars start, all because of soccer matches—the United States has long stood as an oasis of indifference to the world's game. Yes, in recent years the sport has exploded in the United States at the suburban grass roots, and has even spawned a cultural archetype: the soccer mom. But soccer at the elite level of play has generally attracted somewhat less interest than, say, ice hockey (though somewhat more than cricket—a foreign curiosity we can't quite get the hang of), and certainly much less than the major American sports. Indeed, with a few significant exceptions, the history of U.S. men's soccer is a long tale of futility.

Even Major League Soccer, launched in 1996 (two years after the men's World Cup was held in this country), though it restored professional soccer to North America, remains strictly minor-league relative both to international soccer and to other American sports. Not all MLS games are televised, and would-be fans must often scour the nether regions of the sports section to find any league coverage. I know this because I'm an avid soccer fan, and without a satellite dish to pick up foreign television, I have to take what I can get. Until lately that meant following MLS's New England Revolution.

Now I have another team to cheer for: the Breakers, who join the Atlanta Beat, the Bay Area CyberRays, the Carolina Courage, the New York Power, the Philadelphia Charge, the San Diego Spirit, and the Washington Freedom in making up WUSA. WUSA's launch marks a profound development in both soccer and women's athletics in this country.

As noted, women's soccer is anathema in much of the world. In 1921 in England, the birthplace of soccer, women were officially banned from playing on professional fields. As the English player and coach Sue Lopez wrote in *Women on the Ball* (1997), soccer was "considered to be an unsuitable game for women; it offended middle-class propriety and gave concern to some of the medical profession, who felt it would damage female reproductive organs." When English women finally began playing seriously, in the early 1970s, the characteristic

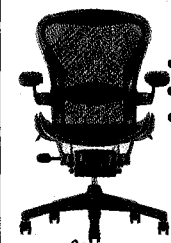
reaction was that of Brian Glanville, the dean of English soccer writers. In a notorious *Times* of London article about the English national women's team's defeat of Scotland in June of 1973, Glanville—borrowing Samuel Johnson's remark about women who preach—wrote that seeing women play soccer was like seeing "a dog walking on its hind legs." "It is not done well," he said, "but it is surprising to see it done at all."

If England has been chilly toward women's soccer, Brazil—which over the past fifty years has raised the game to its creative height—has been downright hostile. In Brazil, as in other Latin American countries where passion for what is called the "beautiful game" runs high, masculinity is inscribed on the sport, and the word for "ball," *bola*, is also used to connote the roundness of female breasts. In recent years the Brazilian women's national team has become one of the top four or five in the world, but the team's games are rarely televised at home, and women who play are popularly assumed to be lesbians or considered somehow masculine. Tony DiCicco, the moustachioed former goalkeeper who coached the U.S. women's national team from 1994 through 1999, points out, "If your daughter wanted to go out for pee-wee football, she'd run into serious resistance. The Brazilian equivalent of that girl wanting to play football is the daughter who tells her parents she wants to play soccer."

Fortunately for women's soccer in the United States, the level of gender equity is higher in this country than it is just about anywhere else in the world. "The reason we lead the world in women's soccer is that we lead the world in feminism," explains Tracy Ducar, the backup goalkeeper for the 1999 World Cup team and now the tough-as-nails starting keeper for the Boston Breakers.

The quest for a professional women's soccer league gained momentum following the spectacular success of the 1999 World Cup—symbolized by the midfielder Brandi Chastain's game-winning penalty kick and her post-kick celebration. The goal was attained in February of last year, when a group of individual investors and cable companies, led by John Hendricks, of the Discovery

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Channel, and including Amos Hostetter, formerly of Continental Cablevision, announced that they had raised \$40 million to start a league that would begin play in 2001.

Several things make WUSA's strategic approach distinctive. First, in addition to being cable-company executives (this ensures that most games will be televised; this season you can see twenty-two of them nationally, on TNT or CNN/SI), the league's owner-operators are all also soccer parents. The enterprise would thus seem to be not just a business instrument but also a social one. Second, in marked contrast to the leagues of the big-three men's sports, where skyrocketing player salaries have helped to drive admission prices above affordability, WUSA is keeping tickets at an average of \$15. "We didn't want a family to have to get a second job in order to buy tickets," says Joe Cummings, the Breakers' general manager. Third, WUSA follows MLS and the WNBA (the women's professional basketball league, which is backed by the NBA) in being a "single-entity structure." Unlike the NBA, the NFL, and other traditional pro leagues that have competing economic franchises with individual owners, WUSA "owns" all eight teams. Players sign contracts with the league, not with a team. Some sports economists say this structure will damage the league in the long term, because it artificially holds down salaries (teams can't bid for a player's services) and impairs normal competitive processes. On the other hand, the start-up costs for a professional sports league are exorbitant; pooling revenues and—yes—keeping player salaries artificially low can help to contain these costs. Most important, the single-entity structure has given WUSA substantial control over which players go to which teams.

To start out, WUSA allocated its twenty "founding players" (the 1999 World Cup team) and four top collegians three to a team, for purposes of competitive parity, marketing effectiveness, and—in a distinct departure from the way most leagues work—player satisfaction. (Julie Foudy, allocated to San Diego, might have preferred to play for the Bay Area. Then again, she might not—her husband is the Bay Area CyberRays' head coach.)

MLS, when it began, allocated its

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foreign players according to ethnic fan bases—Latin Americans to Los Angeles, for instance, and Eastern Europeans to Chicago. WUSA proceeded differently. From May to October the league's vice-president for player personnel, Lauren Gregg, traveled the world, interviewing foreign players, talking to their local club teams and national federations, and negotiating contracts. In the professional-sports world this is unorthodox—getting players to sign a contract with a league before a team drafts them. By the time the foreign-player draft was held, on October 30, Gregg had received commitments from four Brazilians, four Norwegians, three Germans, two Swedes, a Canadian, an Englishwoman, and a Japanese.

More unorthodox still was the way the draft was conducted. Recognizing that linguistic and cultural barriers would create adjustment difficulties for the international players (and knowing that they had to be kept happy if their countrywomen were to follow in the future), WUSA grouped as many players as possible for drafting in pairs (Brazilians with Brazilians, Norwegians with Norwegians) and then paired the remaining players with others who spoke the same language or whom they already knew. After the draft took place, Gregg managed to get commitments from five Chinese players, including the great Sun Wen, perhaps the best female player in the world; they were drafted individually in December.

To fill out the training-camp rosters, WUSA held an invitation-only tryout at Florida Atlantic University, in Boca Raton, the first week in December. The indefatigable Gregg, who had long been an assistant coach and scout for the national team, managed to bring together the 200 best amateur players in the country. Coaches and scouts from the eight teams strolled among them and evaluated talent in preparation for the fifteen-round draft, which occurred December 10 and 11. Unlike, say, the NBA draft, which is covered by every major media outlet, this one drew no press—so aspirants had to check WUSA's Web site every few minutes to see if they'd been drafted. "I sat for hours clicking 'reload' on my browser to see whether I'd been picked," a player who ended up on the CyberRays told me recently.

Don't expect to see in WUSA the same kind of athleticism you would see in the men's game. The women's national team sometimes practices against under-sixteen boys' teams—and loses. "They just boot it over our heads and run past us," Kate Sobrero, the national-team and Boston Breaker defender, told me. But in most important technical respects—ball control, shooting, tactical sense, and, above all, passing—the women are just as skillful as the men.

Some basketball connoisseurs argue that women's basketball is "purer" than men's: it's more dependent on teamwork, the "pick-and-roll," and moving without the ball, and less centered on airborne dunking dramatics—it's basketball the way the game used to be played. But for fans accustomed to the high-flying acrobatics of the NBA, the more ground-bound play of the WNBA can appear plodding. Women's basketball is different in kind from the men's version (they even use different-sized balls). Women's soccer, on the other hand, differs from men's only in degree. And in some respects, I would say, it is better.

Soccer's myriad creative possibilities derive in part from its being played on such a large field. The long runs "to space" and the extended passing sequences that build from the back and move in geometric patterns toward the goal are, to my mind, what lend the sport its sometimes transcendent beauty. In the men's game the speed with which these movements unfold can be awe-inspiring; in the women's game the plays still unfold fast, but slowly enough that the spectator can see them developing. Also, many of the great men's strikers are notable for their ability to move deftly in small places; the women sometimes do this too—but they need to less often. "With their speed and size, twenty-two men fill up a field pretty well," says Tony DiCicco. "The same number of women leave more open space on the field," and thus a wider variety of tactical approaches.

Also, women's soccer by its nature addresses one of the primary complaints that football- and basketball-addled Americans make about soccer—its lack of scoring. Because women are on average smaller than men, they fill up much less of the goal (the men's-national-

team keeper, Brad Friedel, is six feet four inches; his counterpart on the women's team, Briana Scurry, is eight inches shorter)—hence there's more scoring in the women's game.

The women of WUSA understand that they are pioneers. Some of the players selected in the league draft last December have abandoned graduate school or burgeoning careers to take a chance on WUSA. "When I was invited to the Boca Raton combine," the midfielder Elie Foster recalls, "I went based on fear of regret: 'If I don't do this, will I look back and wish that I had?'" Leaving behind a lucrative position as a marketing manager at a (successful) dot-com start-up in Silicon Valley, Foster moved across the country when she was drafted by Boston, and is sharing an apartment with Allie Kemp, who left her job as a first-grade teacher in Encinitas, California, to join the Breakers' training-camp roster as a forward. The possibility of failure is considerable: players will be cut; the league itself may not survive. But the chance to earn a living playing soccer full-time was too much to pass up.

This is a new attitude—hard-won, American, and not yet global. Tony DiCicco, now WUSA's chief operations officer, tells a story about the European Football Symposium held in London in November of 1998. DiCicco was there to make a presentation about the Women's World Cup, to be held the following year. He showed a video and some slides. People were awestruck that the U.S. Soccer Federation had planned an event of such magnitude around women's soccer. The plenary assembly was about to break into separate sessions when a man stood up. "He was from an enlightened European culture, not a backward country," DiCicco says. "He pointed to a poster showing Brandi Chastain and a Norwegian player fighting for a ball and said, 'I look at that and I see ugliness and muscles ... This is not what this is supposed to be about.'" DiCicco says he replied, "If this poster were of men playing, you would have seen fitness, athleticism, commitment. We need to change people's attitudes so that that's what they see when it's women, too." ■

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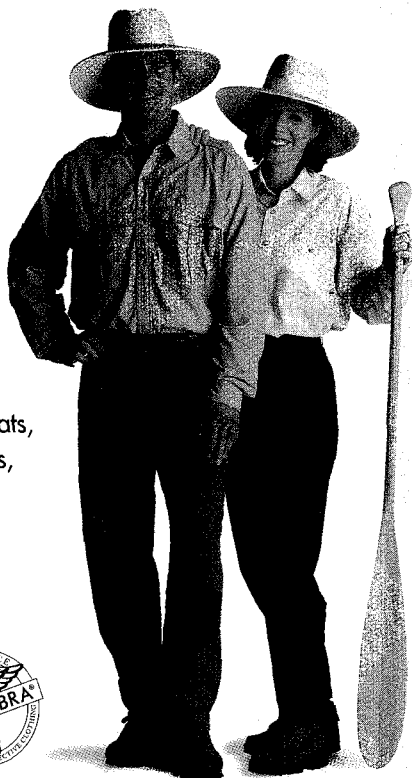
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**AN OMNIVOROUS
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*Anthony Powell, the author of
A Dance to the Music of Time,
also wrote one of the great literary
memoirs of the twentieth century*

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

To get one question out of the way before we begin:

At one of these public interrogations (I am not sure which college) a professor prefixed a question by saying—rather archly—that he was uncertain how to pronounce my name. As an inspiration of the moment I replied that like the Boston family of Lowell I rhymed it with Noël rather than towel.

Here Anthony Powell was describing an incident on his tour of New England in the early 1960s, and he gave some tincture of both period and place. In Boston,



The restaurant of our hotel ... was called *The Hungry Pilgrim*. Outside stood an exemplar of esurient puritanism dressed in a black-and-white Cromwellian costume with hair in a pigtail, which was a shade anachronistic and had not yet become at all chic for men. From time to time, looking as if he had just landed from *The Mayflower* and was in urgent need of a square meal, this gaunt figure would ring a bell. In general, however, Boston, a city of considerable charm, suggests a date later than the 17th century ... Boston does not disappoint. Even on the briefest visit one can detect layer upon layer of the Bostonianism celebrated in such a long American literary tradition. When I was there in 1961 Little, Brown's, with much other entertaining, gave me luncheon at that haunt of ancient peace, shrine of Boston brahminism, the Somerset Club. The party included Edwin O'Connor, an American novelist I had already come across in England.

The Somerset Club is deservedly



famous. I doubt if any club in London could equal—certainly none surpass—the inspissated and enveloping club atmosphere of The Somerset. Ancient armchairs and sofas underpropped one or two equally antiquated members, ossified into states of Emersonian catalepsy in which shadow and sunlight were not only the same, but had long freed them from shame or fame. It was comforting to see so splendid a haunt from the past surviving intact in a widely disintegrating world.

And it is cheering to think of Powell, the pre-eminent novelist of English traits,

discussing there so happily with the author of *The Last Hurrah*.

Some of the supposed difficulty or intractability of Anthony Powell is on show in these passages—a slight fus-

siness about etiquette and detail, and an almost affected pleasure in the antique or the nearly expired. Moreover, why say “esurient” when “hungry-looking” would do, or “insipissated”

instead of “stifling”? Perhaps because “esurient” may also suggest “greedy” or even “voracious,” and because “insipissated” denotes an atmosphere or an ele-

**TO KEEP THE BALL
ROLLING: THE MEMOIRS
OF ANTHONY POWELL**

University of Chicago
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ment that has been thickened or congealed by *evaporation*—the perfect term for clubland's residuum. In the context of commercialized puritanism in one case and brahminism in the other, we find an author who would rather be thought puritanical—or even stuffy—than use a lazy or obvious word. Look again, and you will see an observant prefiguration of the “theme” kitsch that we now all take for granted. Look one last time, and muse on the implications of “Emersonian catalepsy.” Look up the whole excerpt, and you will find that O'Connor told Powell a very amusing story about Evelyn Waugh, which story Powell subsequently tracked to its principals before finding it to be quite untrue but well worth repeating.

This is all part of the task for which I happily volunteer: recommending the reading of Anthony Powell. I say “happily” because I have never induced anyone to try him and been subsequently cursed for my pains. Indeed, I have been thanked in almost broken tones. Yet those of us who till this vineyard, on either side of the broad Atlantic, occasionally adopt a pre-emptively defensive posture all the same. When Powell died, in March of last year, at the age of ninety-four, the *New York Times Book Review* devoted a “Bookend” column to the obsequy, written by Ferdinand Mount, the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* and Powell's nephew by marriage. (A revision of his piece serves as the foreword to this edition of the memoirs.) Not even Mount, though writing at such a moment, felt that he could avoid a long, throat-clearing refutation of charges of snobbery, elitism, and suchlike. “As a matter of fact,” he asserted of his uncle-in-law, “his fiction was extraordinarily democratic.”

Oh, dear. I agree with this claim, but without feeling the slightest need to advance or defend it. (Can there be “undemocratic fiction”—the only discovery that would necessitate or imply its counterpoint?) Powell's fiction is “democratic” because it is realistic and humane and somewhat given to the absurd. If you like, it also shows an acute awareness of a stable and long-settled

society in transition. It confronts sex and death and unfairness, and brushes against love, poverty, and war.

To Keep the Ball Rolling (which is an abridgment of *Infants of the Spring*, *Messengers of Day*, *Faces in My Time*, and *The Strangers All Are Gone*, originally published as four separate volumes) is democratic in that it shows a great and omnivorous curiosity about the lives and motives of others. And if one chooses to read these memoirs from the standpoint of the New—or, indeed, the old—Criticism, they may stand as a *Bildungs*-memoir or palimpsest of Powell's celebrated twelve-volume *A Dance to the Music of Time*. For example, as a small boy Powell was taken to watch the funeral of King Edward VII, in 1910 (an experience shared by many London children), and he knew enough about the need to please adults to claim that he had seen Caesar, the late King's dog, which had padded along behind the royal coffin and thus became, as Powell dryly recorded, “a great tear-jerker.” From this distillation of childhood half memory he intuited the following:

I must, however, have glimpsed for a moment the officer of 2nd Life Guards commanding the escort riding a short way behind the gun-carriage. This was the 5th Earl of Longford, later killed at Gallipoli; father of my future wife. We possess a photograph which includes my father-in-law, as well as my father: Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Longford on his charger just behind Caesar's kilted attendant; Captain Powell among the group of regular army adjutants standing at attention with drawn swords.

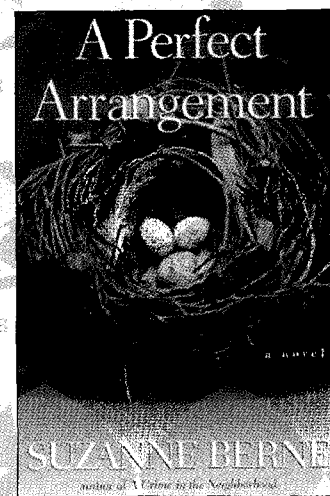
Powell's novels appear to depend much on delicate threads of coincidence, and some readers have claimed to find the coincidences too dependent on the inbreeding of class. However, probably many English people could have discovered their future fathers-in-law in an early group shot, even if that shot was not taken at a royal interment. More indicative as a childhood memory is this one. The author reckoned that he was no more than six.

After the park and the street the interior of the building seemed very

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silent. A long beam of sunlight, in which small particles of dust swam about, all at once slanted through an upper window on the staircase, and struck the opaque glass panels of the door. On several occasions recently I had been conscious of approaching the brink of some discovery; an awareness that nearly became manifest, then suddenly withdrew. Now the truth came flooding in with the dust infested sunlight. The revelation of self-identity was inescapable. There was no doubt about it. I was me.

This passage helps to introduce the oft attempted comparison between Powell and Proust. There is, first and most obviously, that ability to evoke childhood which is, alas, lost to so many of us but still, somehow, recognizable when well done. Then occurs a possibly related thought: Does this capacity, in its literary expression, bear any relation to the existence of a secure and well-ordered society—the sort of predictable structure and placement that a curious and intelligent child could begin to puzzle out for himself? And then a succeeding thought: May not a self-awareness acquired so early be invaluable in both noticing and delineating the character of others?

Powell showed great familiarity with the work of Proust while avoiding much direct reference to him. The allusions are mostly oblique, as in this very laconic reflection on the art of memoir.

One of the most peculiar aspects of autobiography is the way in which some authors are acceptable in their sexual and suchlike intimacies (Proust masturbating in the lavatory), others are without great interest in these rôles, at worst only embarrassing. At first sight, the simple answer seems to be that some write 'well'; others less well; but in the field of self-revelation the altogether uninstructed can produce a masterpiece of apt expression; the seasoned writer, at times a cliché. I can find no literary explanation other than that only certain personalities are appropriate to dissection; others not.

The words "others not" are quite superfluous to that sentence, and indeed to that passage; nonetheless, they form a coda that I would not be without. Like Proust, Powell was not exactly pithy

(I can't offhand recall any "quotations" from Powell, as one can from his great contemporaries Wodehouse and Waugh), but I hope I have conveyed something of the worthwhileness of hearing him out. One learns to trust certain raconteurs, even if they appear at first to be long of wind.

And Powell could be terse when he chose. During the early Nazi bombardment of Britain he was in uniform and received the news that his frail wife, after at least one miscarriage, had given birth to a son: "I found that becoming a father had a profound effect upon the manner in which one looked at the world." That's all he wrote about that. The clear implication is that those who understand will understand already, and those who do not either never will or will find out in their own good time. No waste of words.

This tone or style is often described as "typically English," and though Powell was proudly and decidedly Welsh (and stressed the Welsh pronunciation of his family name), it is no more possible to picture him as, say, Russian than it is to imagine Proust's hailing from Barcelona. Just like Nicholas Jenkins, the first-person narrator of *A Dance to the Music of Time*, Powell was born into the British military caste, educated at Eton and Oxford, "launched" in the world of literary London in the 1920s and 1930s, and gravely inconvenienced but also much matured by wartime; he attained seniority and status just as the old and solid Britain and its empire were undergoing deliquescence. Every page of both fiction and memoir bears the impress of these facts in one form or another.

The Duke of Wellington is still tirelessly quoted as having said that the Battle of Waterloo was really won "on the playing-fields of Eton"—a tribute to the values of the rigid upper lip and all that. One of the minor delights of these memoirs is that Powell, who took a particular interest in the aristocracy, met a later Duke of Wellington while serving in the British army. Among this duke's "keenest convictions was that his ancestor had never uttered the opinion ... [and he offered] a standing

remuneration of a hundred pounds to anyone who could prove its authenticity." Nor is this the only example of Powell's readiness to write against stereotype. In an early section on his first days at a boys' school he recorded, "Teaching was good, though not at all intensive. Mr Gibbs, an attractive personality, showed that it was perfectly possible for a headmaster to be also a nice man." I reeled back as I read this betrayal of the canonical tradition; no self-respecting Brit can write about his early education without at least some reference to sadism and misery, and to my knowledge no author has tried it since Byron set the standard. So one is relieved to find that at his very next school Powell was starved and browbeaten, and that by the time he was fourteen, he was able to make quite a brisk diagnosis of one of the masters, who "preferred goodlooking boys to plain ones, but not to excess, and one would suppose him a repressed bisexual." Powell continued, "A touch of kinkiness was added by a fervid preoccupation with ladies' shoes (a fancy said to presage masochism)." That's more like it.

In point of his own political outlook Powell achieved some comparable understated effects. He seems at first glance to have been an axiomatic and inflexible young Tory. He described a contemporary as "given to singing the *Internationale*, a tune for which tone-deafness presented no handicap." Visiting Spain in 1933, he recorded the impression that "administration was breaking down everywhere"—as if this were a law-and-order problem rather than the stirrings of a republic. He evinced no apparent interest either in the social questions or in those who were occupied with them; the radicals in his novels and in these pages are mainly clowns or hypocrites. Yet for several crucial years he was extremely close to George Orwell, whose flinty socialist principles—and persistence in trying to live up to them—might well have invited Powell's gentle ridicule but (perhaps because they were not bogus) instead won his respect. The pages recollecting his friend are of interest and some beauty.

Goodness knows what Orwell would have been like in the army. I have no doubt whatever that he would have been brave, but bravery in the army is, on the whole, an ultimate rather than immediate requirement, demanded only at the end of a long and tedious apprenticeship.

Here again, reading that deceptively dense sentence, one is reminded of what it is to be molded by a very highly evolved and somewhat stratified society. In such a system courage is neither a sufficient nor even in the strict sense a necessary condition for the high calling of arms; a force that depended on mere bravery would be merely a militant rabble—subject to mood swings, perhaps, and indubitably depriving its officer corps of opportunities for understatement. Such almost invisible writing about the most palpable of questions is a continual distinction of Powell's work and an unending reward for the reading of it.

Powell chose the hymns for Orwell's funeral, in 1950.

The Lesson was from Ecclesiastes, the grinders in the streets, the grasshopper a burden, the silver cord loosed, the wheel broken at the cistern. For some reason George Orwell's funeral service was one of the most harrowing I have ever attended.

As I say, Powell knew when and how to write sparsely. He also had some sense of the gold standard as applied to people. The fact of his having helped out liturgically at the funeral of that determined atheist calls attention to what I think is the inescapable conclusion that Powell, too, had no use for religion per se. He didn't flaunt the fact, but the absence of religion as a subject—an absence also very large in his fiction—eventually obtrudes itself. Consider this statement of his cherished values.

It is better to remain calm; try to remember that all epochs have had to suffer assaults on commonsense and common decency, art and letters, honor and wit, courage and order, good manners and free speech, privacy and scholarship; even if sworn enemies of these abstractions (quite often wearing the disguise of their friends) seem unduly numerous in contemporary society.

Hard to imagine leaving "faith" out of that taxonomy unless on purpose.

Writing of a close and admired wartime friend, Alexander Dru (a relative by marriage of Evelyn Waugh's), Powell wondered (as one so often does about newly made friends) how it was that he had never met Dru before. Later on he supplied a clue by observing in passing that Dru was "a Roman Catholic of profound—though incessantly searching—belief, he was on the whole inclined to frequent Catholic circles (no doubt one of the reasons we never met)." Something more was being said here than that Powell was not himself a Catholic. As the memoirs scrolled out in four "movements"—childhood, youth, maturity, and late middle age, mirroring the subdivision of *Dance* into the four seasons—Powell began to strike the note of "melancholy." (A word search—not that he would countenance such a thing—would disclose an increasing reliance on the term.) This is interesting in two respects: Nicholas Jenkins is represented as working on a biography of Robert Burton, the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, and Powell decided to face the problem head on in, so to speak, real life.

Even after reaching one's early sixties letters start to arrive from insurance firms and the like opening with the words: 'You will soon be sixty-five, etc., etc.', causing the recipient to reflect: 'Well, it's been kind to allow me to stay so long.' As the eighth decade gradually consumes itself, shadows lengthen, a masked and muffled figure loiters persistently at the back of every room as if waiting for a word at the most tactful moment; a presence more easily discernible than heretofore that exhales undoubted menace yet also extends persuasive charm of an enigmatic kind.

Death is the mother of beauty,
hence from her,
Alone, shall come fulfilment of
our dreams
And our desires

Anyway that was what Wallace Stevens thought; others too. Again—as with loudly decrying the world and its ways—a tranquil approach is probably to be preferred, rather than accept too readily either Death's attractions or repulsions ... better that the dual countenances of the ubiqui-

tous visitant should not cause too prolonged musings on either the potential relief or potential afflictions of departure. Better, certainly, not to bore other people with the subject.

Again, in this masterly harnessing of the stoic to the limpid, a brisk coda ensures against any languor or, indeed, *longueur*. Try reading it in combination with the arm-wavings of that other Welshman Dylan Thomas, all about rage and dying and light, and see which holds up best. And then, just as one thinks that must be the old boy's final word (the term "bore" is designedly the most annihilating in the English vernacular), there is this:

All the same the presence in the corner—whose mask and domino never quite manage to keep out of sight the ivory glint of skull and bones beneath—seems to imply, even if silently, something of that once familiar cadence, harsh authoritarian knell of the drinker's passing day ... 'Last orders, please—time, gentlemen, time,' in this case the unspoken sanction: 'Last conclusions, please.'

Such a nicely subliminal evocation of *The Waste Land* gives a polite nod, in passing, to the faithful while helping to demonstrate that Powell himself declined their invitation.

The reflections of successful writers on other writers, and on the craft of writing, can be astonishingly banal. On the whole, Powell preferred to make very vague and general and lenient remarks about his fellow authors, especially if they were contemporary. But many readers, I suspect, would be surprised by his lack of enthusiasm for P. G. Wodehouse—a lack that, although not elaborated, is explained in part by this mild but firm judgment on Evelyn Waugh.

He really did believe in entities like a 'great nobleman', 'poor scholar', 'literary man of modest means'. Of course, in one sense, such stylized concepts may certainly exist, but at close range they usually require a good deal of modification ...

The 'high-life' of *Decline and Fall* is mostly depicted from imagination, hearsay, newspaper gossip-columns. Later, when Waugh himself had enjoyed a certain amount of

first-hand experience of such circles, he was on the whole not much interested in their contradictions and paradoxes. He wished the beau monde to remain in the image he had formed, usually showing himself unwilling to listen, if facts were offered that seemed to militate against that image.

In Powell's understated terms, this ranks quite high on the scale of condemnation. (He was elsewhere at some pains to praise Waugh as a man, to sympathize with him in his troubles, and to defend him from some accusations of rudeness.) The position he was championing, it must be emphasized, was that of realism. Waugh may have fancied himself a Tory modernist, but Powell intuitively knew that the claim was somewhat phony. He was also implicitly defending himself as the chief claimant while indirectly rebuking the critics who lazily arraigned his work for Waugh's sins of snobbery.

In his youth Powell spent some time in the Baltic and in Finland, where his father was *en poste* as a military attaché. (The experience led to one of his early experimental novels, *Venusberg*.) I do not know whether this conditioned him to an interest in Russian writing, but in a paragraph so brief that one might almost miss it he did say roundly that for him the chief author was Dostoevski, whose "characters and situations have one of the qualities I prize highest in a novelist, the ability to be at once grotesque yet classical, funny and at the same time terrifying."

This struck me forcibly when I read it again, because these memoirs do consent, every now and then and with a certain resignation, to identify certain minor characters in Powell's *Dance*, the detection or unmasking of whom is a long-established parlor game in English literary circles. Yet Powell never ventured the least discussion of his most finished and fearsome cast member, the Dostoevskian Kenneth Widmerpool. There are multiple and variegated achievements in *Dance*, but this creation is Powell's certain ticket to literary immortality, an evil figure of fun whose crass, obtrusive, unstoppable visage we are all doomed to confront at some time or another. I apologize for

quoting myself on Widmerpool, but the effort it cost me to summarize him when reviewing *Dance* is one I could not bear to attempt again.

The shortest way of capturing the essence of this grotesquely fascinating and repellent figure might be to say that he is a monster of arrogance and conceit, *but entirely wanting in pride*. Bullying to those below him, servile and fawning to those set in authority, entirely without wit or introspection, he is that type of tirelessly ambitious, sexless, and charmless mediocrity that poisons institutional life, family life, and political life. He is the perfected utilitarian and philistine.

You've met him, all right. He would be recognizable in any culture. But he has never been traced to any "model," and Powell disdained to play the game anyway in this instance—for the excellent reason that Widmerpool belongs with Falstaff and Raskolnikov and Uriah Heep, and not in the pages of *Who's Who*.

American readers inclined to regard Powell as too insular might be surprised, and not unpleasantly, by his selection of Hollywood and American encounters: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Erich von Stroheim, and Paul Robeson.

"Fitzgerald," he wrote, "—that rare phenomenon, a 'bad' writer who made himself into a 'good' writer—had lost much of his former appeal simply because he had begun to produce immeasurably better novels than his early work." The two men lunched at the MCM commissary during Powell's rather disappointing stint in Hollywood in 1937. His description of the meeting contains one of the best encapsulations of character on short acquaintance that I know of. It is rounded off, from the memoir point of view, by Powell's being acute enough to notice, from later reading, that the date of the lunch (July 20, 1937) was the day on which Fitzgerald had his fateful dinner meeting with Sheila Graham.

Powell met Stroheim more glancingly, some years later, at a festival of Stroheim's films in London. Stroheim was evidently in a "profoundly melancholy" mood, from which he was roused only by Powell's recollection of the group of military attachés on Montebianco maneuvers in *The Merry Widow*.

(During the war Powell had been a liaison officer with the exiled military staffs of Hitler's victim nations.) Stroheim kindled at this compliment to his sense of detail—or sense of realism—but lapsed back into melancholy, saying, "I no longer look like the *Oberleutnant* I once was."

As for Robeson, Powell met him during a KGB-supervised lunch for the hack Stalin-era novelist Mikhail Sholokhov. The following vignette gives one a sense of missed opportunity.

I mentioned to Paul Robeson that I had been fortunate enough to see his *Othello* which he had played in London a long time before. I would have liked to discuss with him the Black WPA *Macbeth* watched in Los Angeles [in 1937], but new introductions had begun to take place. In fact, Robeson's *Othello* had been interesting rather than impressive. He had seemed to tackle the role with a sense of grievance alien to Shakespeare's selfconfident Moor. The Black WPA players had been infinitely less tense.

Again the dry sting in the tail; it would have been something to witness the scheme of this conversation as played out in a Soviet embassy drawing room. (Powell passed on a tip from Gore Vidal about attending workers'-paradise writers' conferences in the old days: "I always sit next to a man in a turban. You get photographed more.")

As for the writerly life itself, Powell gave occasional guidance throughout, much of it rather conversational but none of it trite, and some of it, it seems to me, positively lapidary. There is more than meets the eye in this memory of adolescent reading.

One day in School Library I came across a magazine (I suppose *The Criterion*) which contained a long account of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. I was very interested by what was said, but this interest seemed quite separate in itself, causing, so to speak, no conversion or repentance as to middlebrow reading matter. Such forms of intellectual double-harness are perhaps characteristic of literary self-education.

When this boy was a bit older, he applied the same pragmatism to the design of an extraordinarily ambitious literary project.

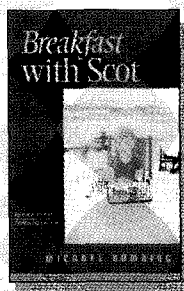
I had been turning over in my mind the possibility of writing a novel composed of a fairly large number of volumes, just how many could not be decided at the outset. A long sequence seemed to offer all sorts of advantages, among them release from the re-engagement every year or so of the same actors and extras hanging about for employment at the stage door of one's creative fantasy. Instead of sacking the lot at the end of a brief run—with the moral certainty that at least one or two of the more tenacious will be back again seeking a job, if not this year or next, then in a decade's time—the production itself might be extended, the actors made to work longer and harder for much the same creative remuneration spread over an extended period; instead of being butchered at regular intervals to make a publisher's holiday.

There were many objections to setting out on such a hazardous road, chiefly the possibility of collapse, imaginatively speaking; simply dying (something bound to happen sooner or later) before completing the book.

These memoirs open with a very young man who began to frequent an antiquarian bookshop run by an indigent admirer of Oscar Wilde's. They conclude in Margaret Thatcher's Britain (the closing volume was published in 1982, when the author was indeed alive to see the vindication of his project), in a long meditation on the authenticity and the sexual character of William Shakespeare. The raw material of life interested Powell, as it had to; its slow refinement into the finished product of culture and society and language absorbed him far more. The suggestion in that last excerpt, of all the world's being a stage, contains a very bold insinuation: a parallel between this diffident and subtle novelist and that inspired, panoptic but ultra-practical Elizabethan actor-manager, who was always ready to write a new scene at need, or to raise an appreciative laugh from the cheaper seats, but who was able to capture both pity and terror in a delicate verbal noose. The implication strikes me as less profane than it might once have done. Powell (even by his choice of a Bardic title for the closing volume) wisely left it latent; but as I say, he did have a sense of the gold standard. ■

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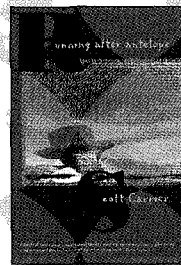


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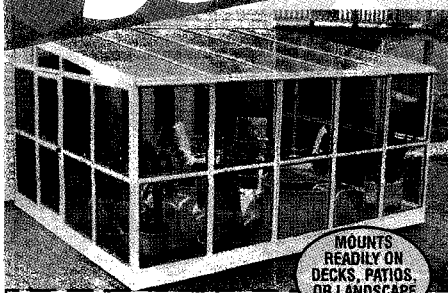
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THE REAL WAR

Stephen Ambrose's GIs are plaster saints engaged in a sanctified crusade

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

In his best-selling books *Band of Brothers* (1992), *D-Day: June 6, 1944* (1994), and *Citizen Soldiers* (1997), the gruff historian Stephen E. Ambrose has advanced a pious interpretation of America's role in World War II. According to this view, America waged a "crusade" to rid the world of the tyrannical and racist regimes of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. America's fighting men "didn't want to live in a world in which wrong prevailed," Ambrose declares. "So they fought," and thereby "stopped Hitler and Tojo."

Buttressed by the NBC news anchorman Tom Brokaw, whose enormously popular *The Greatest Generation* (1998) and *The Greatest Generation Speaks* (1999) are largely inspired by Ambrose's work, Ambrose has come to define the war in the American mind. His previous books examined only the U.S. military's participation in the European theater of operations. But in *The Good Fight*, written "for young readers," he promises to present a chronicle of the entire global struggle. His extraordinarily widespread appeal almost certainly ensures that Ambrose will mold another American generation's understanding of the war. (This book will likely become, as the publisher predicts, "THE book on World War II for kids.") Because this is a book for young adults, the arguments and point of view are somewhat simplified. But Ambrose's interpretation in *The Good Fight* is similar in language, tone, and substance to that in his books for adults, and in fact several passages are taken verbatim from *Citizen Soldiers*.

Ambrose's version of events retroactively imposes an elevated meaning on the American side of the war. Although *The Good Fight* neglects a host of relevant events and subjects that did not directly involve the United States (the V-weapon attacks on Britain; Op-

eration Bagration; the resistance movements in Yugoslavia, Italy, and France, to name a few), Ambrose does discuss—and in greater detail than any other event save D-Day—the Holocaust. Young readers could be forgiven for inferring that the plight of the Jews and others

THE GOOD FIGHT

by Stephen E. Ambrose
Simon & Schuster,
96 pages, \$19.95

in the death camps in part motivated America's involvement in the war. Ambrose quotes a former U.S. Army major who "voiced the emotions of so many of his fellow soldiers" when, many decades after the event, he maintained that when he saw Dachau, he said to himself, "Now I know why I am here." In truth, stopping the mass murder of Jews figured in no way in either American war aims or American conduct. In fact, U.S. political and military leaders, along with the press, played down the Nazi effort to exterminate the Jews, and the Army's own propaganda film series "Why We Fight" didn't even mention the Holocaust.

As the critic and literary historian (and World War II combat veteran) Paul Fussell reminded us in *Wartime* (1989), his study of the psychology and emotion of the United States at war,

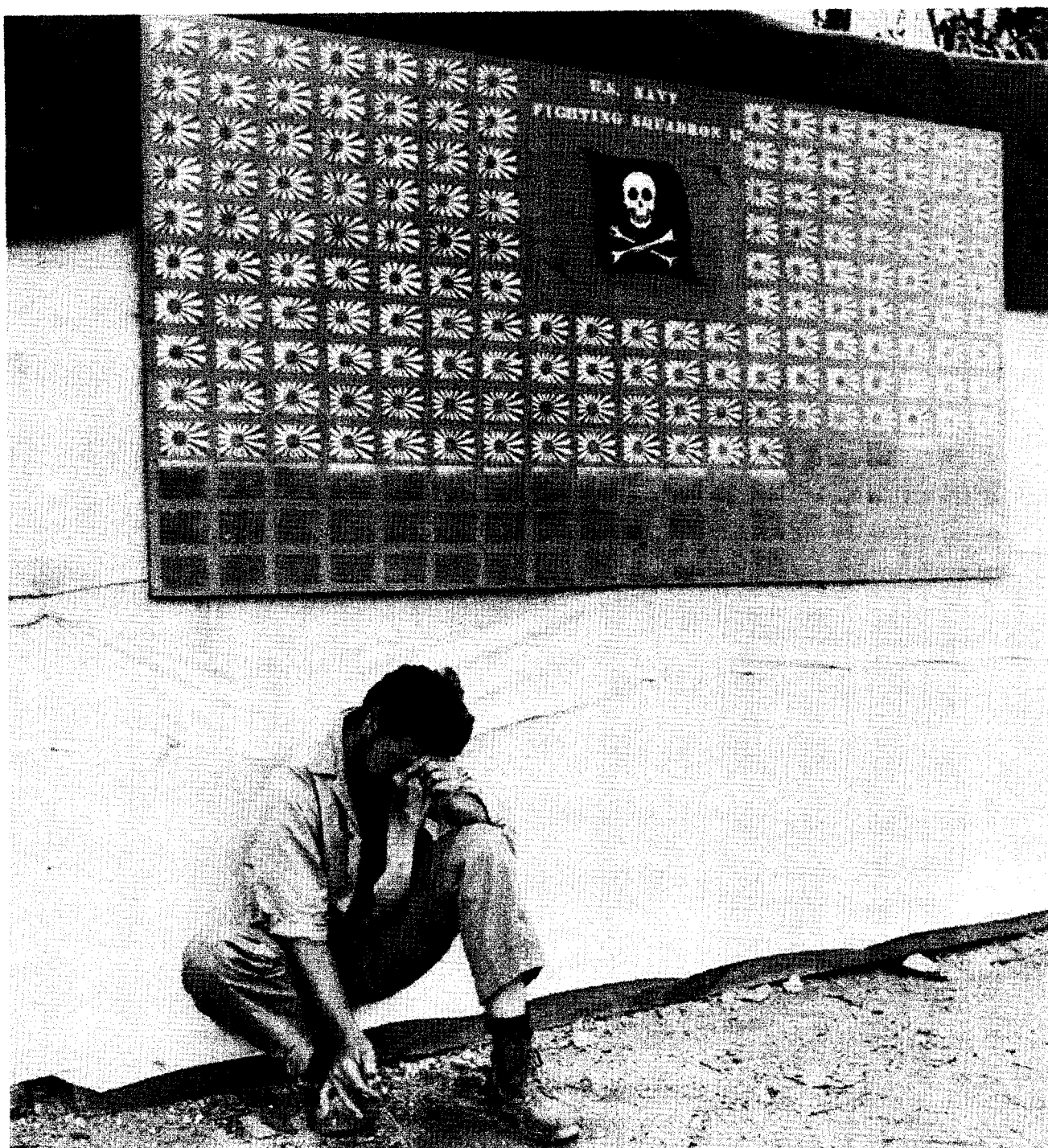
For most Americans, the war was about revenge against the Japanese, and the reason the European part had to be finished first was so that maximum attention could be devoted to the real business, the absolute torment and destruction of the Japanese. The slogan was conspicuously *Remember Pearl Harbor*. No one ever shouted or sang *Remember Poland*.

(This understandable American passion for vengeance against Japan easily metastasized into what Britain's ambassador in Washington called a "universal 'exterminationist' anti-Japanese feeling" in the United States and among its armed forces overseas.)

The Good Fight is littered with lofty cant. To say, for instance, that the pur-

pose of Operation Overlord (the Normandy invasion) "was to free France from Nazi tyranny" is to transform history writing (albeit "for kids") into rhetoric. That statement places the accents on all the wrong syllables. Overlord's goal was to establish a literal and figurative beachhead in Western Europe in order to help destroy German military power and hence end the war. To characterize it as Ambrose does is to confuse incidental results with fundamental purpose.

His literary endeavors seem largely motivated by a laudable desire to praise America's World War II fighting men. Ambrose honors them, however, not simply by chronicling their indisputable bravery and toughness but by insisting on a sentimental and high-minded explanation of what those men believed they were fighting for. In his books he repeatedly asserts that U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines "knew they were fighting for decency and democracy and they were proud of it and motivated by it." (Or, as Brokaw insists, "Everyone understood that the successful outcome of the war was critical to the continuing evolution of political and personal freedom.") But has any man ever killed and risked being killed for such abstract, imprecise, and gaseous sentiments? Ambrose, if not Brokaw, has read too much military history not to acknowledge plainly—as he wrote in a passage in *Citizen Soldiers* which contradicts the thrust of the rest of the book—that, according to the vast literature that assesses the motivation of U.S. fighters in World War II, "there is agreement that patriotism or any other form of idealism had little if anything to do with it." "The GIs fought because they had to," he continued. "What held them together was not country and flag, but unit cohesion." In the same book Ambrose papered over this difficulty by informing his readers that although the GIs fought for "decency and democracy," "they just didn't talk or write about it" (emphasis added). How, then, does he know? Rather than rely on what these men did write and say repeatedly during the war (which boils down to the reason-



"An essential part of their experience was terror and madness on an unfathomable scale." A Navy flier on Bougainville Island, 1944

able, even courageously clear-eyed, but hardly righteous formula of kill or be killed, fight the war to end it so that we can go home), Ambrose draws on reminiscences and interviews and at least one "beer-drinking bull session" with a small number of veterans forty-five years after the fact—hardly the most reliable testimony.

Aiming to honor U.S. fighting men, Ambrose instead turns them into plas-

ter saints engaged in a sanctified crusade, and so does them a disservice. Few eighteen- and nineteen-year-old males who had spent months slaughtering and witnessing slaughter would recognize themselves in Ambrose's celebration (in both *Citizen Soldiers* and *The Good Fight*) of "the spirit of those GIs handing out candy and helping to bring democracy to their former enemies." Many would even look askance

at the following remark "about what it all meant," which Ambrose praises as "one of the best comments":

In the spring of 1945, around the world, the sight of a twelve-man squad of teenage boys, armed and in uniform, brought terror to people's hearts. Whether it was a Red Army squad, ... or a German squad ... or a Japanese squad ... that squad meant rape, pillage, looting, wanton destruction, senseless killing. But there

was an exception: a squad of GIs, a sight that brought the biggest smiles you ever saw to people's lips, and joy to their hearts.

First, what about our allies the British Tommies? They weren't reputed to be barbaric hordes either. More important, although American soldiers acted as honorably as could reasonably be expected, such a statement belies the evidence of rape, looting, and the murder of enemy prisoners. Very few GIs were criminals, but Ambrose's approach discounts the real—and dehumanizing—experience of war for all fighting men. In trying to explain why American soldiers were so contemptuous of home-front attitudes, Fussell wrote,

It was ... the conviction that optimistic publicity and euphemism had rendered their experience so falsely that it would never be readily communicable. They knew that in its representation to the laity what was happening to them was systematically sanitized and Norman Rockwellized, not to mention Disneyfied.

An essential part of their experience was terror and madness on an unfathomable scale, and one of the ways some of them achieved relief was, indisputably, by committing acts of brutality.

To be sure, a world of difference separated Americans' motivations for such acts from the institutionalized hatred that inspired, say, German soldiers on the Eastern Front. Nevertheless, Ambrose's sunny depiction of U.S. soldiers' behavior (a photo of a GI shaking a toddler's hand graces the cover of *The Good Fight*, and Ambrose assures us that "America sent her young men halfway around the world ... not to conquer, not to pillage, not to loot, not to rape, but to liberate") ignores the terrible fact that a great casualty of America's involvement in the war was, unavoidably, American "decency." Six months after Hiroshima the war correspondent Edgar L. Jones acknowledged in this magazine,

What kind of war do civilians suppose we fought, anyway? We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off the enemy wounded, tossed the

dying into a hole with the dead, and in the Pacific boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved their bones into letter openers.

Ambrose's romanticizing of "the good fight" evades the truth that for the men who fight it, war—even a war that defeats Nazi Germany—is, as William Tecumseh Sherman wrote, "cruelty, and you cannot refine it."

Still, the impulse behind many of Ambrose's evasions is understandable. Take, for example, his depiction of the air war against Japan. No doubt he is impatient with ill-informed and tendentious arguments suggesting that America's incendiary-bombing campaigns against Germany and Japan, as well as the decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were particularly immoral. In fact, it's impossible to imagine that any responsible leader of any of the democracies would not have employed the atomic bomb if it meant, as it surely did in Harry Truman's case, ending the war sooner and saving the lives of that leader's countrymen. And although, of course, all the states fighting the war terrorized their enemies' populations, the United States was indeed more squeamish about employing such means than any other belligerent. Still, Ambrose's discussion of the U.S. strategic-bombing campaign against Japan, which admits no shades of gray in what young readers would construe to be blameless American conduct, is highly misleading. According to Ambrose,

This new stage in the air war [fire-bombing] started in the middle of February 1945. The results were greater than anyone ever expected. Because most Japanese buildings were made of wood, entire cities were destroyed ... Everyone knew that Japanese civilians would be hurt in these attacks. No one liked it. The goal was to destroy Japan's industrial might, not its civilians. But the Japanese leaders kept the civilians near the war-industry factories.

This omits and obfuscates far more than it explains. That the materials of which Japanese cities were built ren-

dered them especially vulnerable to firebombing came as no surprise to U.S. war planners: even before Pearl Harbor the Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall had directed his aides to make contingency plans for "general incendiary attacks to burn up the wood and paper structures of the densely populated Japanese cities." It's true that the primary purpose of the bombing was not to kill civilians—although terrorizing the Japanese nation was one of the intended if ancillary goals of the campaign (along with the crass aim of promoting the establishment of an independent Air Force in the postwar era). Ambrose is correct that the main objective was to destroy Japanese industry, and that the only way to accomplish this was, in essence, to burn Japanese cities entirely. But it's also true that this meant that 300,000 Japanese men, women, and children, overwhelmingly noncombatants, were "scorched and boiled and baked to death," as Major General Curtis LeMay, who planned the campaign, later wrote. And those civilians were killed not because they were "kept" near factories but because factories happened to be dispersed throughout residential areas, owing to the willy-nilly way Japanese industry had developed.

Ambrose's suggestion that at the time of the firebombing concern for the lives of Japanese civilians played an important role in U.S. military or civilian leaders' planning is equally misleading. The intelligence officer of the U.S. Fifth Air Force—using the logic that, after all, defined "total war"—declared at the time, "The entire population of Japan is a proper military target. *There are no civilians in Japan.*" One can argue with the conclusions of Brigadier General Bonner Fellers, a close adviser to General Douglas MacArthur, who claimed in a confidential memorandum at the time of the incendiary bombings that the campaign was among "the most ruthless and barbaric killings of non-combatants in all history" (and, in fact, a cogent, if cold, argument can be made that the firebombing campaign was militarily justifiable), but Ambrose's version of events is entirely untenable.



"Sentimental and high-minded"? U.S. and Soviet soldiers meet in Germany, 1945

One grasps just how simplistic and sanctimonious Ambrose's approach to his ostensible subject is, however, only when one reads in this and his other works the repeated and triumphant assertions that it was U.S. soldiers who would "win the war against Nazi Germany" and that Americans "stopped Hitler." His implication that America is morally great because it defeated what was probably the most hideous regime in history becomes somewhat muddier when we recall that the United States was very much the junior partner in that crusade, which was fought primarily by Stalin's Soviet Union—probably the second most hideous regime in history.

Ambrose's books both reflect and have intensified and helped to shape a self-aggrandizing mythology of World War II. Readers are promised on the jacket flap that *The Good Fight* is a "chronicle of World War II." But what

young readers get is a solipsistic—and egregiously skewed—history. Forget for now that Britain fought the war alone against Hitler for more than a year (a fact easily forgotten, since it goes unmentioned in Ambrose's account, along with the Battle of Britain and the Blitz). Without question, the main scene of the Nazis' defeat was the Eastern Front, a theater of operations that Ambrose entirely fails to assess in his narrative of "how World War II was won." The conflict there was the most terrible in history, claiming, according to the best and most-recent estimates, as many as 35 million Soviet civilians and 14.7 million Soviet soldiers. And more to the point, Ambrose's readers wouldn't know that the struggle with the USSR accounted for 88 percent of all German casualties.

Until the Normandy invasion—from June of 1941 to June of 1944—nearly the whole Nazi war machine was con-

centrated in the East; even two months after D-Day 2.1 million Germans were fighting the Red Army while one million opposed Allied operations in France. Ambrose devotes more space in *The Good Fight* to D-Day than to any other event, and he clearly sees that operation as the pivot of the war and of his narrative. In fact the turning point of the war in Europe was not at Normandy or anywhere else Americans fought but either at Stalingrad, two years before D-Day, where the Red Army eradicated some fifty divisions from the Axis order of battle, or at Kursk, nearly a year before, where the Soviets smashed the Wehrmacht's strategic tank force, breaking the Nazis' capacity for large-scale attack. Ambrose lavishes a section of *The Good Fight* on the U.S.-British invasion of Sicily, which drove 60,000 Germans from the island, but completely ignores Kursk—the largest battle in history, in which at least 1.5 million Soviets and Germans fought, and which occurred at exactly the same time. Neither Ambrose nor we need honor Russia's war dead as we do our own, but simple honesty demands that we acknowledge the Red Army's awesome achievement. And as much as it may make us squirm, we must admit that the struggle against Nazi Germany (which Brokaw asserted was "testimony to America's collective and individual resistance to tyranny") was primarily, as the great military historian John Erickson called it, "Stalin's war."

Ambrose's view of World War II is similar to what Robert Penn Warren characterized as the self-righteous "psychological heritage" bequeathed to the North by the Civil War. Both engender what Warren called a "treasury of virtue"—a moral narcissism that can make us insufferable to other nations and can delude us into behaving like a crusader state. But the great problem with Ambrose's books—especially this one—is that they fail to treat history as tragic, ironic, paradoxical, and ambiguous. If readers are old enough to study an event that involved the deaths of more than 60 million people, they are old enough to learn that one studies history not to simplify issues but to illuminate their complexities. ▀

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

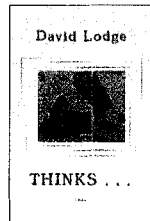
*Elegant novels of ideas, sparkling summer reading,
travels with Dame Agatha*

.....

Neuroscience, as Tom Wolfe pointed out in his essay "Sorry, But Your Soul Just Died," is at this moment "the strategic high ground" not only in the academic world but well beyond it. Recent discoveries about the human brain, which show its workings to bear an unnerving resemblance to those of an analog computer, have thrown age-old ideas about the nature of human identity into question. Who are we? Do we really have a self, a soul, free will?

David Lodge, the extraordinarily clever and accomplished author of comic masterpieces such as *Changing Places*, *Small World*, and *Nice Work*, has always been a deft anatomist of intellectual trends. He, like Wolfe, clearly takes seriously the philosophical challenges posed by neuroscience, and in this book he has concocted a smart, seductive novel of ideas. The setting is a university in the west of England. Helen Reed, the author of several exquisitely sensitive, feminine novels, holds old-fashioned notions about consciousness: as a teacher of writing and literature, she makes a specialty of Henry James, and as a lapsed Catholic, she holds a residual, rather vague faith in the immortal soul. Her opposite number, who bears the Jamesian name of Ralph Messenger, is a cutting-edge, media-savvy cognitive scientist, confident, unsentimental, and extremely male. The self, spirit, soul, as far as he is concerned, "are just ways of talking about certain kinds of brain activity." "You're a machine," he tells Helen, "that's been programmed ... not to recognize that it's a machine."

What starts out as an intellectual friendship between the recently widowed Helen and the long-married Messenger soon heats up. The cheerfully



THINKS...
by David Lodge
Viking
352 pages, \$24.95

amoral Messenger suggests an affair; Helen, still mourning her husband and encumbered with scruples about sleeping with married men, demurs. She is shocked by Messenger's skeptical interpretation of moral behavior. The uneasy sexual equilibrium is shattered when Helen makes a series of discoveries that disturb her complacent views. Liberated from guilt, she throws herself into passion and self-gratification—perfectly illustrating, in the process, Messenger's model of human motivation. But events take a turn she had not anticipated, and she must readjust her ideas about love, marriage, and self-interest all over again.

Lodge is one of the most readable writers now at work. In *Thinks...* he shows himself to be at the top of his form: his smooth gift for narrative has never been more in evidence; neither has his easy way with the theoretical, or his mastery of (as he once wrote of the late Kingsley Amis) "that combination of surprise and logicity that is the heart of comedy." —BROOKE ALLEN

Richard Russo first made his reputation with a series of blue-collar novels that suggested a more antic and expansive Raymond Carver. But by the time he published *Straight Man*, in 1997, Russo was clearly interested in breaking new ground, and that foray into academic farce showed off his comic timing and sneaky construction to superb effect. Now comes *Empire Falls*, the author's most ambitious work to date. The title refers to a down-at-heel town in contemporary Maine whose pulp mills and shirt factory have long since fallen silent, leaving the population to eke out a living along the economic margins—in bars, doughnut shops, greasy spoons. Russo attends to both the mighty (the pluto-



EMPIRE FALLS
by Richard Russo
Knopf
512 pages, \$25.95

cratic Whiting clan) and the meek (everybody else). Yet the focus of this post-industrial panorama is Miles Roby, the manager of the Empire Grill, who seems to preside serenely over the collapse of his personal and professional lives. His wife has left him for the local fitness-club mogul, and his restaurant, leased unto eternity from the rapacious Francine Whiting, is on its last legs. Miles, however, is a pathologically nice guy. And Russo gets the maximum mileage out of his protagonist's passivity, making it a source of laughter and melancholic recognition: "One of the odd things about middle age, he concluded, was the strange decisions a man discovers he's made by not really making them, like allowing friends to drift away through simple neglect." It may be that the author, a master of sweet-and-sour narrative, has allowed Miles's good nature to grow a little too sugary. And at just over 500 pages the novel feels overstuffed. Still, we sense that the protagonist's lengthy fuse will lead, sooner or later, to an explosion—and when it finally comes, Russo's slow-burn strategies prove to be smart ones after all. —JAMES MARCUS

The pain of loss and longing suffuses this story of Myra Lipinski, childless and unmarried at fifty-one. "You know people like me," she begins. "I'm the one ... that everybody liked and no one wanted to be with." The only child of emotionally remote Polish immigrants, Myra has been a loner all her life. At fifteen she decided to become a nurse, so that she could "offer comfort, especially when that comfort was so sorely needed, so sure to be taken." As one of her patients later says, "There's nothing worse than having all this stuff you want to give away and then not being able to find anyone to take it."

Now Myra is a visiting nurse in Boston. She drives an expensive car, cooks comfort food, buys herself birthday presents "the price of which must exceed \$150," and dotes on her dog. She accepts what she calls her destiny. Then



NEVER CHANGE
by Elizabeth Berg
Pocket Books
214 pages, \$23.95

her high school classmate Chip Rear-don, "every girl's dream boy," "the handsome star athlete with a good head on his shoulders," comes under Myra's care. She had a crush on Chip in high school, "a full-time longing" that seems scarcely to have abated since. "Now I can have him," she thinks.

That this classic adolescent fantasy should come true may invite readers' exasperation or disbelief, even allowing for its cruel price: Chip has a fatal brain tumor. And he is not a particularly persuasive character. But the rest of Myra's patients beguilingly demonstrate Elizabeth Berg's great talent for writing dialogue and portraying relationships. Among them is the irresistible DeWitt Washington, a drug dealer with a gunshot wound. In one scene he responds to Myra's sadness by asking if she is "pillowed." Astonished, she stops crying. "What?!" he says. "It's not such a dumb question. I seen plenty of wom-ens act like you and the problem is? ... P-R-E-G-N-U-T!"

Toward the end Chip says to Myra, "I lived my whole life unable to make a vital connection. Not because I couldn't; because I wouldn't ... It's the same for you." Vital connections are Berg's primary concern. Readers of her earlier novels will hear echoes in the broad themes of *Never Change*. Like *Range of Motion* and *Talk Before Sleep*, this book is about the wisdom and closeness that crisis can bring. The narrative road that leads to them is funny, poetic, and moving. —MARTHA SPAULDING

Witty and wry, with tendrils of a suitable romance at its edges, this is summer reading at its best. On the occasion of her mother's accidental death, Sunny Batten returns to the tiny, unpicturesque town where she grew up. King George, New Hampshire, is the sort of place where the police chief (and part-time paper-hanger), when breaking the bad news, suggests that Sunny might remember him from study hall, and the owner of



THE DEARLY DEPARTED

by Elinor Lipman
Random House
269 pages, \$23.95

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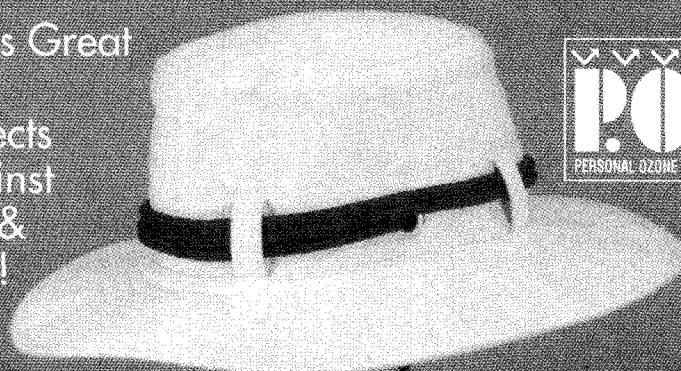
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the single motel turns the lights off after dark because she doesn't want to be awakened. There, along with discovering some secrets about her mother's happy life and growing to like a brash half-brother she never knew she had, Sunny learns a universal truth: Things get better after high school.

Lipman impressively harmonizes a large group of keenly observed characters and generously gives nearly all of them good hearts, despite their faults. *The Dearly Departed* entertains the reader with quirky details and amusing dialogue, but most nourishing is its picture of small-town life, in which everyone knows everyone else's business but they love one another just the same. —CHRISTINA SCHWARZ

The priest whose faith threatens to collapse is a familiar figure in Western fiction. But in the hands of the British novelist Simon Mawer that figure takes on fresh, eloquent life. Indeed, Mawer's protagonist, Father Leo Newman, a biblical scholar based in present-day Rome, is a memorably hard case, shaped by a family background that taps into the heart of the Nazi-era nightmare, and possessing the intellectual tools that guarantee he'll recognize faith-shattering truths when they come his way.

Those truths emerge most vividly in a newly discovered "Gospel of Judas," found in a cave overlooking the Dead Sea. If genuine, it pre-dates all the Gospels of the New Testament and will change the premises of Christian faith forever. But other sorts of truth—sexual, psychological, vocational—also begin to wear down Leo's defenses as Mawer draws the disparate strands of his story together. The book's assured orchestration of linking imagery and parallel incidents (two troubling deaths, two love triangles) offers keen formal pleasure. And pleasure turns to deeper satisfaction as Mawer delves into the failed resurrections and flawed transfigurations that result from his charac-



THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS
by Simon Mawer
Little, Brown
336 pages, \$24.95

ters' volatile desires, delusions, and deficiencies.

The Gospel of Judas is the second of Mawer's novels to be published in this country, and it fulfills the high expectations raised by his U.S. debut, *Mendel's Dwarf*, three years ago. Here we have another gifted British writer of idea-driven fiction, deserving of mention alongside Iris Murdoch, William Boyd, and Michael Frayn. Mawer's prose is admirably lyrical, playful, and precise. His greatest strength, however, is in crafting probing, puzzlelike narratives that yield compelling dramas of the mind and heart. Three of his earlier novels have not yet been published here. It is time to bring them out. —MICHAEL UPCHURCH

In Cartavio, Peru, a four-year-old Marie Arana spies on her parents as they come home in the wee hours of the morning, presumably after a party: "My mother ... her long, gold hair throwing light like a tungsten filament; her all-American, Hollywood face alive with expectation ... my Peruvian father—black-haired, handsome, smiling and shouting Spanish over his shoulder, waving a bottle in his fist as if he were a carnival barker on opening day. His friends spill in behind them ... My parents are young. It is their moment ... When love seems infinite, the road feels free, and nights trip festively into day." With this gorgeous opening vignette the author's themes spring instantly to life. More than a memoir, this is a family history, made up of leisurely loops that Arana casts back to the Spanish conquest of Peru and forward to her North American present, conjoining the lives of her father's lordly Aranas and her mother's helter-skelter Clapps.

A person of a metaphorical turn of mind can read into this book the history of U.S.–Latin American relations, and if that's what you feel like doing, you'll suspect that Arana is abetting you. But the book also reads like a novel—almost. A fiction writer aiming for verisimilitude would have toned some of this



AMERICAN CHICA
by Marie Arana
Dial, 309 pages,
\$23.95

material down. Surely no novelist would have had the narrator's mother marry so many times. And no one but Gabriel García Márquez would have dared to invent an adventurer uncle who lends the household a monkey and an ant-eater. *American Chica* tells a fantastical, spellbinding tale. —BARBARA WALLRAFF

To read Agatha Christie's memoir is to experience what her husband, the renowned archaeologist Max Mallowan, called "a loving and merry companionship." A favorite aunt takes one by the hand and, confiding the liveliest memories of her happiest years, evokes a vanished world that is oddly familiar today from mystery novels written before most of us were born.

With the reissue of *Come, Tell Me How You Live* we can once again join Christie in her travels with Max to digs at Tell Brak and Chagar Bazar in the late 1930s. She called it "a very little book, full of everyday doings and happenings." But it is not everyday to us. We are roughing it in French colonial Syria and Iraq, traveling, because the Mallowans were English, with aplomb and authority. Indeed, Max was paterfamilias to 140 workmen—Kurds, Turks, Armenians, and Arabs—and dealing with such un-English contingencies as the luring away of a pious lady brothel keeper's best girl by the Mallowans' servant.

And yet it is Christie's "everyday doings" that delight us, from the shopping problems of a middle-aged woman in London trying to outfit herself for Asian deserts to the difficulty of reprimanding a houseboy for drying dishes with a bed sheet. "But," he replies in extenuation, "it is not a clean sheet."

Christie finished this book in 1944, partly in order to brighten the war years. Crisply ironic, it glows with memories of a land where people once said of political trouble, "It does not touch us here." "It is good," she wrote, "to remember there were such days and such places." —ALAN BUSTER



COME, TELL ME
HOW YOU LIVE
by Agatha Christie
Mallowan
Akadine
207 pages, \$18.95

THE MISTRESS OF GLOOM

Anita Brookner "has always been ready to strip her heroines of the illusion that they can actually get what they want"

BY MIRANDA SEYMOUR

.....

Do not be deceived by the title of this book, or by the fact that much of Anita Brookner's twentieth novel, as lean in size and as unsparing in judgment as its predecessors, is illuminated by the brilliant sunshine of the French Riviera. Nor draw hope from the name of her young heroine: Zoë, signifying life. This is, even for Brookner, an unusually cheerless work, about the moral education of a young woman as assessed by herself in retrospect. The lesson she learns is that a wise woman expects nothing from life and will probably get it. Only a fool, Brookner suggests, would believe the lessons offered by the novels and fairy tales in which Zoë, like many of her predecessors, has rashly placed her trust. Poor girls who sit and wait to become princesses get nowhere. Ordeals may lead only to further suffering. There are no rewards for virtue beyond self-respect. Life is best viewed as a journey toward death, to be lived with attentive restraint.

This is the philosophy that Anita Brookner has been ably illustrating since 1981, when she published the slyly witty autobiographical novel *A Start in Life* (titled *The Debut* in this country), a work that deliberately played on the title of Honoré de Balzac's *Un Début dans la Vie*. Its heroine is Ruth Weiss, whose literary work—her subject is Balzac's women—invites comparisons between her personal situation and that of Balzac's poor Eugénie Grandet, the marooned victim of her own plainness and difficult parents. Ruth wishes to distance herself from Eugénie but cannot. Kitty Maule, in *Providence* (1982), Brookner's second novel, has a similar tussle with her destiny. "I do not want to be trustworthy, and safe, and



THE BAY OF ANGELS

by Anita Brookner

Random House,
205 pages, \$23.95

that they can actually get what they want. The lesson delivered seems, with each successive novel, increasingly harsh in its predictability. The novelist's admirers nevertheless remain a stalwart

bunch. Her art criticism, delivered most recently in the supremely elegant *Romanticism and Its Discontents* (2000), is thought by many to be old-fashioned and lacking in fire, although Brookner was highly enough regarded to be made, in 1968, the first woman Slade Professor of art at Cambridge. Her novels continue to win her praise on both sides of the Atlantic. In England her admirers have made enthusiastic comparisons to Jane Austen, Gustav Flaubert, Henry James, Anton Chekhov, and Barbara Pym. Those who are uncomfortable with her message take refuge in compliments on her purity of style (David Lodge) and "technical skill" (Sebastian Faulks). Others practice ambivalent praise: "How does she do it, time after time?" (A. N. Wilson). Her regular readers rejoice in the uncommon acuteness of her observations, the wicked accuracy and malice of her asides, the sinewy eloquence of her prose.

Moments like the one in which Edith Hope, of the Booker Prize-winning novel *Hotel du Lac* (1984), flees from her own wedding provide a sharp delight that time does not diminish. Is it unfair to grumble because such moments are now rare? Should readers try to separate their pleasure in the novels from the

discreet," she thinks to herself. "I do not want to be the one who understands and sympathises and soothes. I do not want to be reliable."

Dream on, Kitty: Brookner has always been ready to strip her heroines of the illusion

grim message those novels convey—that women cannot take life into their own hands; that accepting what they are offered is their best option? (Brookner has, of course, written about men from time to time, but it is the women who dominate her landscape, and they tend to be women of a type: forlorn figures who seem always to be looking for Henry James's bench of desolation on which to deposit their meekly skirted behinds for an afternoon of fruitless anticipation.)

Readers of her *Undue Influence* (1999) could be forgiven for supposing that Brookner, at last, had decided that her grim questions had been asked and answered, and that she was entering a golden period of benevolent wit. The tone was animated. A return to the temperate uplands of the first novels and—to name two of her best—*Latecomers* (1988) and *A Family Romance* (1993), which was published as *Dolly* in the United States, seemed to be in the offing. Reviewers rejoiced: we had missed the nuanced irony and deliciously unveiled self-deception of those works, in which Brookner's feline wit is most fetchingly displayed.

Undue Influence was one of Brookner's finest novels. Its successor, *The Bay of Angels*, is one of her most capriciously dissatisfying. Both are told in the first person by young women, but of very different characters. The earlier narrator, Claire Pitt, leads the usual modest Brookner life—she works in a bookshop run by two timid, well-bred ladies, has one similarly inactive female friend, and spends her time poring over 1950s women's magazines. Claire is mildly pitiful; like most Brookner heroines, she is conscious of this, and thus pre-empts any easy sense of superiority on the part of the reader. Her self-consciousness is, indeed, precisely what makes her such enjoyable company. She is delightfully capable of mocking her passion for the illustrations in magazines of the postwar period, for loving the strange coziness of the gloved and hatted wives who stand at ease beside their garden gates, ready to do the morning shopping. This is Claire's private indulgence; in other respects she is a skeptic, as rational as her creator. She can mock religion, one of Brookner's favorite targets: how, she

asks, had such an angry Father had such a “charming Son?” She can even, unusually for a Brookner woman, express unapologetic dislike for a parent, her father. (Mothers, however trying, remain above reproach.)

Claire believes she is worldly and astute, but Brookner has a strange relish for humiliating her heroines in the good cause of teaching them a useful lesson. Claire—like Fay Langdon, in *Brief Lives* (1990); like Rachel, in *A Friend From England* (1987); like Kitty Maule, in *Providence*; and like Edith Hope, in *Hotel du Lac*—is punished for her inability to see things as they are. Like her predecessors, she combines a sharp eye for faults in others with an astonishing obliviousness of how others may perceive, or choose to use, her. The moment of dramatic disclosure in Brookner’s novels is often the payoff, the entertainment that allows the reader a smile at the heroine’s expense. One might question the propriety of such a device by such a scrupulous writer, but it undeniably provides exquisite, if chilly, amusement.

To suggest that Brookner is a comic writer might seem perverse; she is, after all, celebrated as the mistress of gloom, the creator of a claustrophobic, overfurnished world in which heat is always oppressive, in which a cup of warm milk offers a welcome conclusion to a slow day of perambulation, in which rejection usually leads to physical decline, and in which anything so robust as physical exercise is roundly condemned. (One grandmother, in *A Family Romance*, is athletically inclined, but she is not praised for it and is further indicted by accounts of her attachment to a religious institute.) But wit is also a Brookner attribute, and though she has disdainfully criticized Jane Austen for having sacrificed passion to the pleasure of entertaining her readers, Brookner’s own humor is of the same swift and aphoristic style: a fast, lethal swipe with claws extended at an unwary target. Examples? They’re easily supplied. From *Romanticism and Its Discontents*: “Poetic sensibility is not one of God’s better-known attributes.” From *Hotel du Lac*: “She was a handsome woman of forty-five, and would remain so for

many years.” From *A Start in Life*, on the potential that the leisurely days of college-based academics provide for a second career as murderers: “plenty of time to plan the coup.” Although Brookner is an unconvincing and stilted writer of dialogue, there are a few splendid exchanges in scenes of sitcom horror. We could cite the eponymous Lewis Percy’s first tea with his intended, Tissy Harper, and her terrifying, chain-smoking mother, during which he attempts to praise Mrs. Harper’s baking skills. There is the gruesomely funny conversation that ensues in *Fraud* (1992) when Lawrence Halliday decides to do penance for a bad conscience by asking Anna Durrant home for dinner with his wife. (Vickie Halliday, after recoiling from Anna’s fox-fur coat, nearly kills her off with an unpleasantly animated fish stew.)

Why harp on humor? Because it’s overwhelmingly absent from *The Bay of Angels*, and because without it the bleakness of Brookner’s outlook becomes almost as disturbing as her remoteness from the reader. How could she, I continue to wonder, have formed the impression that readers of *Hotel du Lac* were so enfeebled in good sense that they would believe that any marriage is better than none? Mr. Neville famously opens his offer of marriage to Edith in that novel with the information that he is “discriminating” and that he owns “a rather well-known collection of *famille rose* dishes.” Forget the fact that nobody on this planet ever proposed in such terms; consider Brookner’s view that people would have liked Edith much better if she had married Mr. Neville.

I’d be surprised if one reader felt that way. I’d beg Brookner to consider a little less austerity, a little less insistence. Her prose is matchless. Nobody writes better—if French, the language in which she immerses herself before writing, is your preferred tongue. The message these elegant sentences press home is as glacial as a north wind whistling over blocks of ice. Writing of the Concourt brothers in *Romanticism and Its Discontents*, Brookner describes “their unflinching pessimism which cannot quite conceal a sorrowing outlook.” The brothers were, she adds, “particularly distinguished martyrs, or monsters, in

their chosen line of duty.” The heroism she grants them, a heroism often painfully achieved by the protagonists of her novels, is of an apparently modest kind: the ability to view life without illusion. This is the goal she holds up, the moral end for which all pain, all tribulation, is worth enduring. No wonder, then, that Brookner despises Anthony Trollope’s cheery conclusions and dotes on the melancholy ambiguity of Henry James. James never sacrificed a probable but unpleasant truth to make life more agreeable for his readers—but neither did he become so scarily zealous as Brookner in stripping away illusions.

Zoë Cunningham, the narrator of *The Bay of Angels*, is of this sad group of Brooknerines who must walk through a long, dark valley of clouded understanding in order to view the misty brilliance of a Turner sun, by which the novelist signifies moral illumination. But light in Brookner’s world can be deceptive.

Zoë’s name is not, apparently, ironic; as Brookner girls go, she is quite vivacious, and she has an observant eye that enables her swiftly to spot a moral flaw or a show of vanity in others; her mother’s rich and well-meaning cousins are lambasted for being lazy, spoiled, and overattentive to their appearance. “Their visits were mercy visits,” Zoë observes, “in the sense that there are mercy killings, with the same admixture of motives.”

This acerbic comment is made stranger by the fact that Zoë is then being presented as an unworldly girl who believes that fairy tales are true and that happy endings always come to the virtuous. The ending she placidly anticipates is a perfect marriage for her long-widowed mother; it is, she thinks, right and normal that Mrs. Cunningham should spend the interim years resting in a chair instead of engaging in what her daughter dismisses as “some productive occupation.” It is also thought quite normal that she herself should spend every evening, her homework done, staring out the window and watching the lights go on in other houses. (Suppress the urge to scream; this is Brookner’s world, remember, not the real one.)

Zoë’s expectations are rewarded at

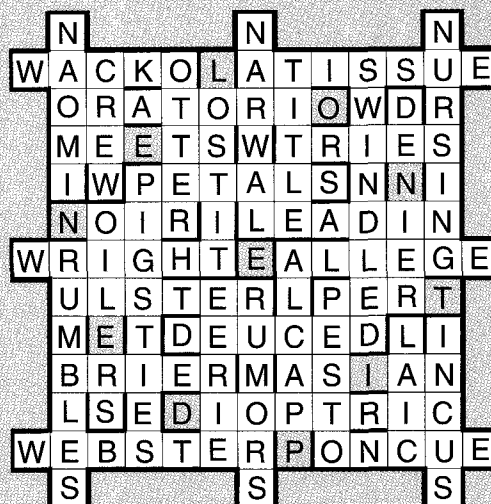
sixteen, when her mother meets, through the scorned cousins, the Prince Charming—for Zoë still thinks in storybook terms—who is to rescue them both. Simon Gould is genial, kind, and rich. Zoë observes that the cousins, although delighted to take her mother on some serious shopping expeditions for a trousseau, dislike the fact that they can no longer patronize her. Zoë loves Simon at once, and gladly accepts his gift of a London apartment—not bad for a sixteen-year-old. Her mother's new future is to be divided between an elegant part of Kensington (Brookner's characters always live above the purses of most of her readers) and Simon's more modern home on the outskirts of Nice.

The contrast between the shadows of London and the brilliance that bathes Les Mouettes, the house by the Bay of Angels, is carefully indicated. Deceived by it, Zoë can persuade herself that the fairy tale has come true and that the Nice house, ugly though it looks, is an appropriate reward. She is dazzled by the blaze of light that shows up the dimness of her sheltered past.

Simon Gould's abrupt death provides the moment of anagnorisis from which all disclosures will unfold. His wealth proves to have been as illusory as the security he seemed to offer. Zoë, abruptly ejected from Les Mouettes by its new and legally entitled owner, is reduced to renting a room over a postcard shop in Nice. From there she supervises the slow dwindling toward death of her mother, who is in a nearby home for invalid ladies in their declining years. Zoë, twenty going on sixty, lives for the weekly visits to her mother and for an occasional difficult conversation with the doctor who recommended, and who owns, the home.

The story is evidently connected to Brookner's own experience of caring for elderly parents until their deaths; it is, Zoë believes, the "common lot" of daughters to become parents to their mothers. She continues to seek independence and to speak as though she belonged to a modern age: she and her friends take a "militant stance," she tells us. No resignation for them: "We were at the cutting edge, fighting for equality. We had no time to rest from our labours."

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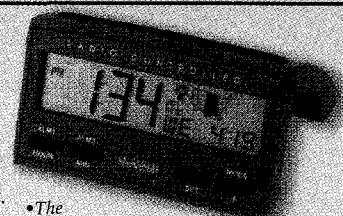
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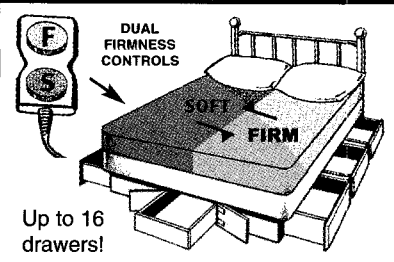


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It is here that Brookner comes badly unstuck. Nothing Zoë has said or goes on to say makes her a convincing candidate for this role. She seems, rather, to be another in the line of Brookner women whose values, working lives, interests, and habits equip them to have run splendid library programs in the 1950s. Zoë's conversation is as outlandish as that of an alien newly equipped with the English tongue. "You look quite personable in this light," she informs Antoine Balbi, the doctor to whom her mother was referred. Describing for him the life she might expect to lead in ten years' time, she can imagine nothing beyond shopping, cooking, reading, and a thankful closing of curtains. "By the evening I shall be frightened again, wondering how to pass the time." Balbi's offer of a cup of tea leads to a bizarre outburst. "I always feel that when a man spends money on you it is some sort of concession," Zoë declares. When Balbi explains that a tisane costs only a few francs, she accuses him of emotional parsimony. The reader will be startled to learn on the next page that, thanks to Balbi's calmness, Zoë regards this evening as "one of the best I had ever spent." It's hard to see why.

Dr. Balbi is not an exciting man. Still, if an angel does exist on the Baie des Anges (and Zoë is eager to find a story behind the name), he is plainly it—reserved, decent, sure of himself and of the fact that freedom is an illusion. It seems right that he should be the vehicle for Brookner's views and the conveyor of them to Zoë. The moment of revelation takes place, by careful authorial design, on the shore of the bay at night, to the sound of the retreating rattle of pebbles. This is the background music of Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," a poem that famously mourns the death of faith. Zoë's grief is for the relinquishing of her dependence on the illusions provided by literature: "I should have to live without such consoling fictions, as most people do," she declares. A little later in the same scene she praises those who choose to live with "unalterable truth," and she places her late mother among them, for reasons that are given but unclear.

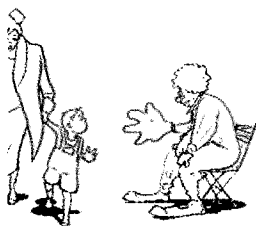
This unflinching, pessimistic accept-

ance of life without promise is the trail toward which Brookner stealthily nudges her characters. There can be no doubt that Zoë has reached maturity. Her future sounds dreary. Dullness is irrelevant; what matters is that she has learned to live without illusion or expectation. Anna Durrant, at the end of *Fraud*, was allowed to retain hope; that is no longer part of the deal in 2001. Acceptance alone is now a sufficient goal.

The prospect is darkening, then, but Brookner's attitude remains consistent. She likes, and has never been ashamed to say that she prefers, a rational world; she has been unflagging, since her sparkling opening to *A Start in Life* ("Dr Weiss, at forty, knew that her life had been ruined by literature"), in her exposure of the dangers of using literature as a guide to life.

And yet where, one can't help wondering, would she be without it? The connections between Brookner's characters and those of the Victorian novels she so often cites are inescapably apparent. Lucy Snowe, the intense, smoldering heroine of *Villette*, has reappeared in different costumes, as Anna, Zoë, and all the rest of those quietly superior Brookner heroines who are so swift and merciless in judgment, so fiercely resistant to criticism. Lydgate and Rosamond Vincy, of *Middlemarch*, provided Brookner with models for the Hallidays in *Fraud*; Tom Rivers's connection to his semi-namesake in *Jane Eyre* is candidly owned in *Falling Slowly* (1998).

When Brookner returns to the continental world (in, for instance, *Family and Friends* [1985] and *A Family Romance*), her stories usually have a radiant freshness, her characters a rare glow of authenticity that bestows charm on even the least likable among them. This is not a tribute that can be paid to her new novel. When *The Bay of Angels* is closed, the reader will find that Zoë Cunningham and her mother become hard to distinguish from the pale army of mothers and daughters who cluster meekly behind them and from whom I, for one, have received enough moral education to dampen my admiration for the clinical purity of Brookner's prose, her magnificent vocabulary, and the dreamless glare of her rational paradise. ▀



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Private Boxes

The eight shaded boxes in the diagram should at first be completely ignored and skipped over by the solver. But when the diagram is complete, the contents of each box will enable new words to be made Across and Down. All eight boxes have the same contents, and one of the new-made words hints at the personage whose boxes these are. (To confirm your guess, rearrange squares 5, 7, 9, 11, 18, 27, and 32.) Answers to clues include an alternate spelling at 21 Down and five capitalized words.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 109.

ACROSS

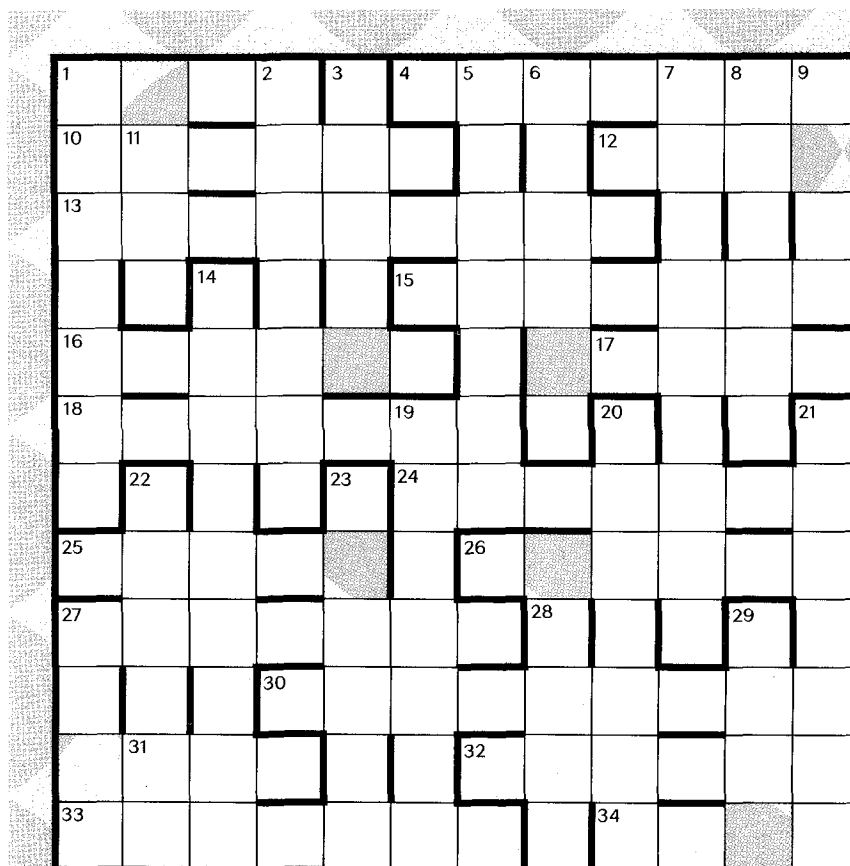
1. The ability to make things exist in an old-fashioned way (3)
4. Signaled hit on a drug lair from the rear (7)
10. Republican dressed in cuckoo-like material (6)
12. Something to name a girl whose mug is turned? (3)
13. When on corsairs, pronounces "Ho, ho, ho"? (9)
15. "Bugs" and "Our Gang" followed by "Crimes" (7)
16. Green and red, as tomatoes and beef (5)
17. Kind of arch that's old and grand (4)
18. Harmful lyrics to a jingle? (7)
24. Land in Act I, or a revamping (7)
25. After back rub, left for Ives (4)
26. *Green Acres* serial's contents (5)
27. Baby food—not healthy with a bump on the tongue (7)
30. Condenser of electric current in peak player (9)
31. "Blue Moo" (3)
32. First of Stuarts in monarchy quit (6)
33. With seniors, they work on joints (7)
34. He has nothing to weed in the garden (3)

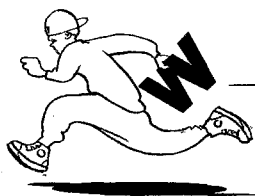
DOWN

1. Mixture for a Gaul's bad leg (7)
2. Upset about race's start, committed a blunder (7)
3. In ancient times, almost the husband of a countess (4)
5. More times before evening-hour hospital drama (7)
6. Given a sort of bump or rub, from the sound of it (5)
7. Managed to get through opening in overturned sofa (9)
8. Sign me up on #2 NASA craft (6)
9. Insult the god of the lower world (3)
11. Slow transportation when on Sunday (3)

14. English town's hot rod game at a pub (9)
19. Buyer and seller of stray parcels (7)
20. Dull, like a mountain lake? (7)
21. Military barracks with a screen busted (7)
22. Black-owned university that may be taken to court (6)
23. Come in third with speed about 50 (5)
27. Kitty's foot in puppy's face— isn't that cute? (3)
28. Second one back for some desserts (4)
29. Coat got returned (3)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.





WORD FUGITIVES

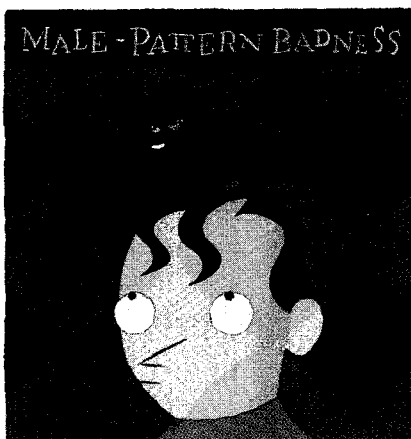
by BARBARA WALLRAFF

When the February *Atlantic* invited readers to come up with two word fugitives, or terms that other readers sought, hundreds responded. One of the wanted words was a masculine counterpart to *hysteria*. If each suggestion that arrived counted as a vote, the winner by far would have been *testeria*, submitted by more than seventy people. A number of *histerias*, *hersterias*, and *malestroms* came in as well. Nancy Strauss, of Excelsior, Minnesota, suggested *malefeasance*; Mort Somer, of Ogden, Utah, suggested *manic expressive*; and two votes were cast in favor of *male-pattern badness*.

Many people, though, protested that English already contains the necessary term. Some wanted to turn *malevolence* or *mania* to the purpose at hand (among them Tom Doyle, of Bristol, Connecticut, who pointed out that the plural of *mania* in this sense should be *menia*). A few, including Sam Abrams, of Rochester, New York, made a case for *musth*. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Abrams wrote, *musth* is "applied to male animals ... in a state of dangerous frenzy to which they are subject at irregular intervals." Several readers mentioned that *testosterone poisoning* is current in approximately the sense wanted, and yet others suggested that *testiness* might fit the bill.

A different existing word, though, earns top honors for one of the several people who proposed it. As it happens, the reader who thought of it first also sent it along in a conspicuously charming letter—and charm, as well as promptness, counts. Lavaine Peterson, of Cloquet, Minnesota, proposed *ballistic*, explaining, "Yes, even though I'm almost seventy-two and a devoted Lutheran churchgoer, I am thinking in a somewhat naughty manner. However, if it will do something to cut down on road rage, the embarrassment will be worth it. Besides, I'd like those free books." Done.

Surely a term to describe mistakenly written homonyms (*your* for *you're*, for instance) would earn its keep in a language that has already made room for such specific words as *protonym*, "the first person or thing to have a certain name, after which others are named"; *poecilonym*, "one of various names for the same thing"; and *anonym*, "a person whose name is not given"—as the author of this word-fugitive request will be this month, although she received credit by name in the February issue.



Ian Piumarta, of Versailles, France, wrote, "Grammarians and linguists alike have for many centuries been in possession of a (somewhat technical) term describing precisely this kind of syntactic substitution. It is called a *mistake*." (Or a *misteak*, or a *misstake*, as others suggested.) Lee Dawley, of South Ryegate, Vermont, wrote to say that he in particular would welcome the coining of an appropriate word. He has multiple sclerosis, which forces him to use a voice-recognition computer program in order to write. He reported, "No sooner did I say *homonyms* than this malfunctioning piece of software gave me *holograms*. And what did it give me for *fugitives*? *Primitives*!"

Nononym was a popular suggestion, submitted by six people. Laura Markos, of Santa Fe, New Mexico, coined *errerr*;

Felicia Lincoln, of Kennet Square, Pennsylvania, *synonym*; and Philip Walker, of Mississauga, Ontario, *doppelklanger*. John Ford, of Coquitlam, British Columbia, wrote, "Since bird-watching is called *ornithology*, why can't we call that kind of word-botching *orthinology*?"

For cleverness combined with aptness, however, nothing beat *illiteration*. Three readers submitted this idea; taking top honors is Rocky Raab, of Ogden, Utah, who was the first to do so.

Now DAVID F. WILSON, of Stamford, New York, writes, "We need a word that means 'a problem caused by a blundering or heavy-handed attempt to cure another problem.' Examples include parties at off-campus apartments because eighteen-year-olds aren't allowed to drink in bars, and groundwater contaminated with MTBE, which is put in gasoline to reduce pollution."

And DAVE GOLDENBERG, of Ridgefield, Connecticut, writes, "In a doctor's office I came across a copy of *Popular Mechanics*, a magazine I loved in my youth for its 'flying car' visions of the world of tomorrow. I was overcome by nostalgia for the future as envisioned in the past, and wished there were a simple term to describe it. I look forward to looking back to the time when this lexical omission was remedied."

Send words that serve David Wilson's or Dave Goldenberg's purposes to *Word Fugitives*, The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the *Word Fugitives* page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by June 30. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like The Atlantic's help in finding. Letters become the property of *Word Fugitives* and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment's correspondents will be sent *Free Flight*, by James Fallows; *Fast Food Nation*, by Eric Schlosser; and *The Truth About Dogs*, by Stephen Budiansky.

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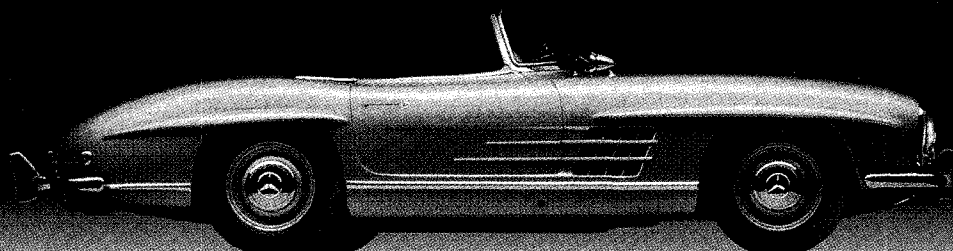
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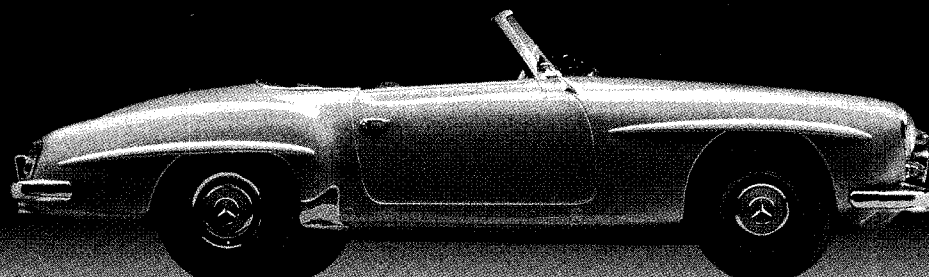
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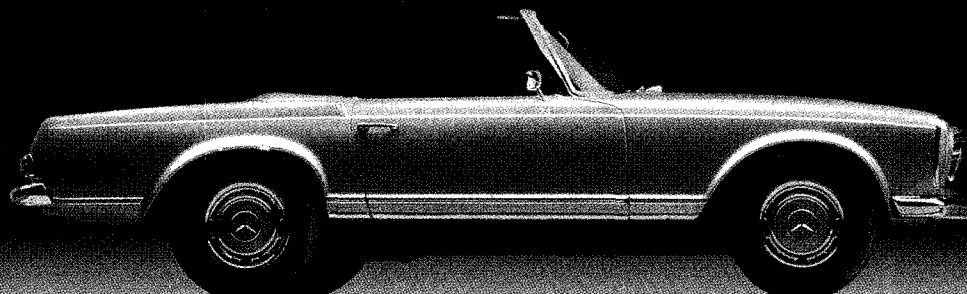
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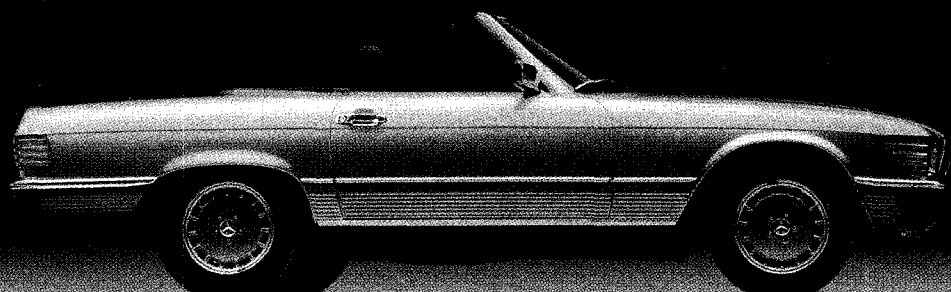
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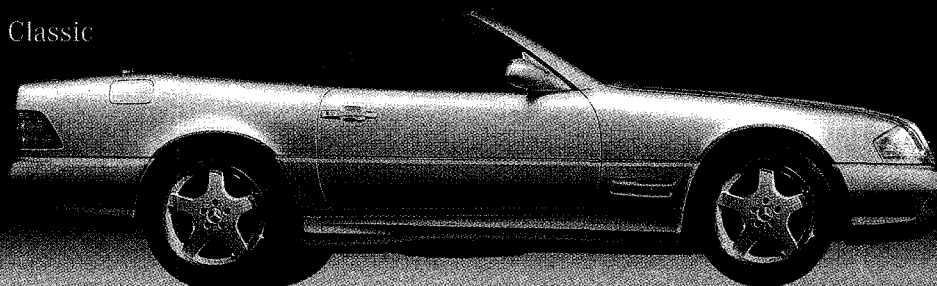
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